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MRS PIPER & THE SOCIETY FOR PSYCHICAL RESEARCH

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MRS PIPER & THE SOCIETY FOR PSYCHICAL RESEARCH

TRANSLATED & SLIGHTLY ABRIDGED FROM THE FRENCH OF M. SAGE BY NORALIE ROBERTSON WITH A PREFACE BY SIR OLIVER LODGE

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

IT is obvious that such a body of men, pledged to impartial investigation, as the Society for Psychical Research could not officially stand sponsor to the speculative comments of M. Sage, however admittedly clear-sighted and philosophical that French critic may be.

But the publication of this translation has been actually desired and encouraged by many individuals in the Society, it has been revised throughout by a member of their Council, and it is introduced to the general reader by their President.

The Society, indeed, is prepared to accept M. Sage's volume as a faithful and convenient *résumé* of experiments conducted under its own auspices, and so far as it contains statements of fact, these statements are quoted from authoritative sources. For the comments, deductions or criticisms therein contained, the acute intellect of M. Sage is alone responsible.

It remains only to state in detail the principles on which the original text has been "slightly abridged" by the translator. No facts or comments have been left out that bear directly on the main subject of the book, the omissions are wholly of matters which might be regarded as superfluous for the understanding of the case of Mrs Piper. Occasionally paragraphs have been condensed, a tendency to vague theorising has been checked throughout, and certain irrelevant matter

has been altogether omitted. Such omissions are confined, indeed, to single sentences or paragraphs, with only the exception of a somewhat technical discussion of the Cartesian philosophy in Chapter XVII. It had at first been intended to omit the whole of Chapter XI., as containing only fanciful and non-evidential matter; but statements of this kind form an integral part of the communications, and so, on the whole, it was thought fairer to retain M. Sage's chapter on the subject, especially as it may be found of popular interest.

The original appendix has been incorporated, after modifications, in Chapter XII., since the incident here discussed was in progress as M. Sage wrote and has since been closed. His conjectures as to its possible development are naturally omitted. Finally all references to the *Proceedings* (or printed reports) of the Society itself have been carefully verified. In every case the words of the reports themselves are given in preference to any re-rendering of M. Sage's translations.

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PREFACE

BY THE

President of the Society for Psychical Research

One of the facts which by general consent in the present stage of psychological science require study is the nature, and if possible the cause, of a special lucidity, a sensitiveness of perception, or accessibility to ideas appearing to arrive through channels other than usual organs of sense, which is sometimes met with among simple people[1] *in a rudimentary form, and in a more developed form in certain exceptional individuals. This lucidity may perhaps be regarded as a modification or an exaggeration of the clearness of apprehension occasionally experienced by ordinary persons while immersed in a brown study, or while in the act of waking out of sleep, or when self-consciousness is for a time happily suspended.*

In men of genius the phenomenon occurs in the most dignified form at present known to us, and with them also it accompanies a lapse of ordinary consciousness, at least to the extent that circumstances of time and place and daily life become insignificant and trivial, or even temporarily non-existent; but the notable thing is that a few persons, not of genius at

[1] Under the name "Second Sight," for instance.

all, are liable to an access of something not altogether dissimilar, and exhibit a kind of lucidity or clairvoyant perceptivity, which, though doubtless of a lower grade, is of a well-defined and readily-investigated type, during that state of complete lapse of consciousness known to us as a specific variety of trance.

Not that all trance patients are lucid, any more than all brown studies result in brilliant ideas; nor should it be claimed that some measure of lucidity, even of the ultra-normal kind now under consideration, cannot exist without complete bodily trance. The phenomenon called "automatic writing" is an instance to the contrary,—when a hand liberated from ordinary conscious control is found, automatically as it were, to be writing sentences, sometimes beyond the knowledge of the person to whom the hand belongs. Some approach to unconsciousness, however, either general or local, seems essential to the access of the state, and such conditions as ordinarily induce reverie or sleep are suitable for bringing it on; no one, for instance, would expect to experience it while urgently occupied in affairs. Whether it is desirable to give way to so unpractical an attitude, and to encourage the influx of ideas through non-sensory channels, is another question which need not now concern us. It suffices for us that the phenomenon exists, and that it occasionally though very rarely takes on so well marked and persistent a form as to lend itself to experimental investigation. It is true that in these cases nothing of exceptional and world-compelling merit is produced; the substance of the communication is often, though not always, commonplace, and the form sometimes grotesque. It is true also that a complete record of a

conversation held under these circumstances — perhaps a full record of a commonplace conversation held under any circumstances—readily lends itself to cheap ridicule; nevertheless, the evidence of intimate knowledge thus displayed becomes often of extreme interest to the few persons for whom the disjointed utterances have a personal meaning, although to the outsider they must appear dull, unless he is of opinion that they help him to interpret the more obscure workings of the human mind, or unless he thinks it possible that the nature and meaning of inspiration in general may become better understood by a study of this, its lowest, but at the same time its most definite and controllable, form. Undoubtedly information is attainable under these conditions from sources unknown, undoubtedly the entranced or semi-conscious body or part of a body has become a vehicle or medium for ostensible messages from other intelligences, or for impersonations; but the cause of the lucidity so exhibited, the nature of the channel by which the information is obtained, and the source of the information itself, are questions which, although they are apt to be treated glibly by a superficial critic, to whom they appear the most salient feature and the easiest of explanation, are really the most difficult of all.

It was to study such questions as this that a special society — the Society for Psychical Research — was founded some twenty-two years ago.

Perhaps the most remarkable, and certainly the most thorough, of all the investigations made under the auspcies of this Society has been the case of the American lady, Mrs Piper; which, begun in 1887, *has continued ever since, with only such intervals as were*

necessitated by the circumstances of the case. She was already known to the Professor of Psychology at Harvard and to some other American savants, but she was brought to the notice of the leaders of the English Society by Dr Richard Hodgson, who has been for some years, and is still, acting as its representative in America, and Secretary of its American Branch. A complete record of the whole investigation has not yet been published, but large portions of it have appeared from time to time in the Proceedings of the Society.

It is not to be supposed that the case is unique by any means; on the contrary, it may in some senses be regarded as typical, but its features are exceptionally well marked, and the record has been more carefully and continuously kept than that of any other case. Accordingly, some emphasis has been given to it, and a general vague notion concerning the case has diffused itself among educated persons beyond the limits of the Society.

And indeed it is one of really general interest, since the hypothesis of fraud is entirely inapplicable to it, and in the opinion of the most sceptical critics who have made an adequate study of the case, no explanation more commonplace than that of telepathy will bear examination. Other critics—and these are they who have gone into the matter most thoroughly—find the hypothesis of telepathy to be insufficient, and hold that some further explanation is necessary. Opinions differ as to what that further explanation may be, and so far as I know it has not been scientifically formulated as yet. To me it appears probable that no one explanation will fit all the facts, and that the subject is not yet ripe for theory. Working hypotheses

must be made, must be tested, and in all probability must be rejected, but our main duty at the present stage is the careful examination and record of facts. The working hypothesis most widely prevalent among the general public, whether for the purpose of scoffing or for a foundation of belief, is some crude form of the idea that the persistent intelligence of persons who have severed their connection with matter is willing, and occasionally even anxious, to take up temporarily the broken thread, and so to operate as to transmit, through any channel which may be open, to us who are still associated with planetary matter, messages which shall serve as a sign of their continued existence and affection; and that the biological organism or part of an organism of a living but unconscious or semi-conscious person is an instrument which may, though with difficulty, be utilised to that end.

It is easy to express this hypothesis in such a way that it is repugnant to common sense. It may be possible hereafter to formulate it so that it shall correspond in some measure with the truth. But even though it should turn out that intelligences can exist apart from the surface of planets and the usual material concomitants, it by no means follows that they must all at some period have been incarnate on the earth. The recognition of modes of existence differing greatly from our own, if it can ever be properly effected, will have an illuminating bearing on many fundamental problems of life and death; but this is not the place to attempt to discuss such a question, even if the time were ripe for the discussion at all.

The Society for Psychical Research, though it has now for some time studied this among other questions,

has arrived at no sort of agreement concerning it; the only fact on which its members are generally agreed is as to the reality of some kind of telepathy, an apparently direct influence between mind and mind; and telepathy is no doubt an important fact, but it by no means follows that it is a master-key capable of furnishing the solution of every variety of psychical problem. The chief work of the Society has not been the construction of theories; it has accumulated and sifted a mass of evidence dealing with ultra-normal human faculty, it has published much material and criticism in its Proceedings, has printed more in its private Journal, and its members have written books. To these accessible sources of information students can be referred.

But it is necessary to get some inkling of a subject before becoming a student of it—people have not time to read a tithe of what is printed; and inasmuch as many erroneous notions and misconceptions are prevalent, even among educated persons, concerning the method and motives of the Society, as well as concerning its ascertained results, it occurred to the Council that perhaps a more popular account of the outline of some of the facts, with abridged examples or illustrations of some of the details, might be of service in spreading the rudiments of a wider knowledge concerning at least one branch of a subject which must certainly be of interest to the human race when it is rightly apprehended.

A popular statement was perhaps the more desirable since a number of insignificant bodies have recently sprung up, showing considerable energy in the business of advertisement, assuming colourable imita-

tions of our Society's designation, but having very different objects—unscientific always, sometimes frankly pecuniary — so that it was quite likely that a certain amount of confusion might occur.

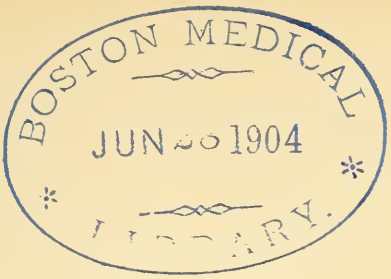
The idea of the Council, in the first instance, was to have a short popular account or summary of the Piper case specially written by one of their own members; but it was brought to their notice that a French writer had already issued a small book of a character not very different from that contemplated, and had steered his way cleverly through the intricacies of a subject bristling with difficulty below the surface and choked with detail throughout; so it was thought best to utilise the skilful work of the French writer, and simply see to it that a faithful translation was made, only introducing changes in the direction of still further abbreviation occasionally.

This is the book for which I consented, though I admit with some misgivings, to write a preface when it was ready to appear; and now that I see it in its English dress I find my misgivings justified.

The author speaks deprecatingly of his purpose in writing it, describing it as "un modeste ouvrage de vulgarisation," *and thereby disarms criticism, for, considered from this point of view, it is successful; but I must guard not only myself but all other members of the Council of the S.P.R. from any endorsement of the sentiments and comments which M. Sage scatters somewhat liberally through his pages. Taken as they were intended in the original, they were not out of keeping; they seemed to harmonise with the general tone and formed part of a consistent artistic scheme. Translated they appear less appropriate, but to omit*

them altogether would be to give the book a different character, and probably to spoil it. As it stands, it is readable, more readable than a profounder treatise would be. Let it pass, therefore, as conveying to readers who have neither time nor inclination to enter upon a detailed study some conception of the most remarkable modern instance of the phenomenon to which I began by referring—a phenomenon of which a better, but by no means yet a complete or final, treatment can be studied in the work of Mr Myers called Human Personality and its Survival of Bodily Death.

OLIVER LODGE.



OBJECTS OF THE SOCIETY

THE Society for Psychical Research was founded at the beginning of 1882, for the purpose of making an organised and systematic attempt to investigate various sorts of debatable phenomena which are *primâ facie* inexplicable on any generally recognised hypothesis. From the recorded testimony of many competent witnesses, past and present, including observations recently made by scientific men of eminence in various countries, there appeared to be, amidst much illusion and deception, an important body of facts to which this description would apply, and which therefore, if incontestably established, would be of the very highest interest. The task of examining such residual phenomena had often been undertaken by individual effort, but never hitherto by a scientific society organised on a sufficiently broad basis. The following are the principal departments of work which the Society at present undertakes :—

1. An examination of the nature and extent of any influence which may be exerted by one mind upon another, otherwise

than through the recognised sensory channels.

2. The study of hypnotism and mesmerism; and an inquiry into the alleged phenomena of clairvoyance.
3. A careful investigation of any reports, resting on testimony sufficiently strong and not too remote, of apparitions coinciding with some external event (as for instance a death) or giving information previously unknown to the percipient, or being seen by two or more persons independently of each other.
4. An inquiry into various alleged phenomena apparently inexplicable by known laws of nature, and commonly referred by Spiritualists to the agency of extra-human intelligences.
5. The collection and collation of existing materials bearing on the history of these subjects.

The aim of the Society is to approach these various problems without prejudice or prepossession of any kind, and in the same spirit of exact and unimpassioned inquiry which has enabled Science to solve so many problems, once not less obscure nor less hotly debated. The founders of the Society have always fully recognised the exceptional difficulties which surround this branch of research;

but they nevertheless believe that by patient and systematic effort some results of permanent value may be attained.

Investigating Committees (with the exception of the Committee for Experiments) are not appointed by the Council; but any group of Members and Associates may become an investigating Committee; and every such Committee will, it is hoped, appoint an Honorary Secretary, and through him report its proceedings to the Council from time to time.

The Council, if it accepts a report so made for presentation to the Society, will be prepared to consider favourably any application on the part of the Committee for funds to assist in defraying the expenses of special experimental investigation.

The Council will also be glad to receive reports of investigation from individual Members or Associates, or from persons unconnected with the Society.[1]

Any such report, or any other communication relating to the work of the Society, should be addressed to Miss Alice Johnson (as Editor of the *Proceedings* and *Journal*), 20 Hanover Square, London, W., or to J. G. Piddington, Esq., 87 Sloane Street, London, S.W.; or in America

[1] Any reports or papers which may be printed in the *Proceedings* will become the Society's property; but author or authors will be entitled to receive 50 copies of any such report or paper gratis, and additional copies, if required, at a small charge.

to Dr Richard Hodgson, 5 Boylston Place, Boston, Mass.

Meetings of the Society, for the reading and discussion of papers, are held periodically; and the papers then produced, with other matter, are, as a general rule, afterwards published in the *Proceedings*.

THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE SOCIETY may be obtained directly from the Secretary, 20 Hanover Square, London, W., or from the Secretary of the American Branch, or from any bookseller, through Mr R. Brimley Johnson, 4 Adam Street, Adelphi, London, W.C.

A Monthly Journal (from October to July inclusive) is also issued to Members and Associates. The Journal contains evidence freshly received in different branches of the inquiry, which is thus rendered available for consideration, and for discussion by correspondence, before selections from it are put forward in a more public manner.

The Council, in inviting the adhesion of Members, think it desirable to quote a preliminary Note, which appeared on the first page of the Constitution of the original Society, and which still holds good.

> "NOTE.—To prevent misconception, it is here expressly stated that Membership of the Society does not imply the acceptance of any particular explanation of the phenomena investigated, nor any belief as to the operation, in the physical world,

of forces other than those recognised by Physical Science."

CONDITIONS OF MEMBERSHIP.

The conditions of Membership are thus defined in Articles 11-18:—

The Society shall consist of: (*a*) *Members*, who shall subscribe two guineas annually, or make a single payment of twenty guineas. (*b*) *Associates*, who shall subscribe one guinea annually, or make a single payment of ten guineas.

All Members and Associates of the Society shall be elected by the Council. Every candidate for admission shall be required to give such references as shall be approved by the Council, and shall be proposed in writing by two or more Members or Associates.

All subscriptions shall become payable immediately upon election, and subsequently on the first day of January in each year. In the case of any Member or Associate elected on or after the 1st October, his subscription shall be accepted as for the next following year.

Article 22 provides that if any Member or Associate desire to resign, he shall give written notice thereof to the Secretary. He shall, however, be liable for all

subscriptions which shall then remain unpaid.

Ladies are eligible either as Members or Associates.

Privileges of Membership.

Articles 19 and 20 provide that Members and Associates are eligible to any of the offices of the Society, and are entitled to the free receipt both of the *Proceedings* and of the *Journal*, to the use of Library books in the Society's rooms, and to attend all the General Meetings of the Society, to which they are also allowed to invite friends. They are further entitled to purchase the *Proceedings* of the Society issued previous to their joining it,—and also additional copies of any Part or Volume,—at half their published price.

Members have the additional privileges of borrowing books from the Library, and of voting in the election of the Council, and at all meetings of the Society.

A contents sheet of the whole series of *Proceedings* may be had on application to the Secretary, 20 Hanover Square, London, W.

Mrs Piper

AND THE

Society for Psychical Research

CHAPTER I

Mrs Piper's mediumship—Is mediumship a neurosis?

MRS PIPER is what the spiritualists call a *medium*, and what the English psychologists call an automatist, which is to say, a person who appears at times to lend her organism to beings imperceptible to our senses, in order to enable them to manifest themselves to us. I say that it appears to be thus, not that it is so. It is difficult for many reasons to admit the existence of these problematical beings. We shall deny it or remain sceptical till the day comes when the evidence proves too strong for us.

Mrs Piper's mediumship is one of the most perfect which has ever been discovered. In any case, it is the one which has been the most perseveringly, lengthily and carefully studied by highly competent men. Members of the Society for Psychical Research have studied the phenomena presented by

Mrs Piper during fifteen consecutive years. They have taken all the precautions necessitated by the strangeness of the case, the circumstances, and the surrounding scepticism ; they have faced and minutely weighed all hypotheses. In future the most orthodox psychologists will be unable to ignore these phenomena when constructing their systems; they will be compelled to examine them and find an explanation for them, which their preconceived ideas will sometimes render it difficult to do.

Praise and warm gratitude are due to the men who have studied the case of Mrs Piper. But we owe no less to Mrs Piper, who has lent herself to the investigations with perfect good faith and pliability. None of those who have had any continued intercourse with her have a shadow of doubt of her sincerity. She has not taken the view that she was exercising a new kind of priesthood; she has understood that she was an interesting anomaly for science, and she has allowed science to study her. A vulgar soul would not have done this. Her example, and also that of Mlle. Smith, of whom Professor Flournoy has lately written,[1] deserve to be followed. If the strange phenomena of mediumship have not yet been sufficiently studied by as many persons as could be wished, scientific men are chiefly to blame for the fact. Many of them regard with disfavour facts which upset painfully-erected systems on which they have relied for years. But the mediums are also to blame, for their vanity is sometimes great, and their sincerity frequently doubtful.

[1] *Des Indes à la Planète Mars ; étude sur un cas de somnambulisme*, by Th. Flournoy. Pub. Alcan, Paris.

Mrs Piper is American. Her husband is employed in a large shop in Boston. Although of a home-loving disposition, Mrs Piper has travelled; she has several times consented to leave her ordinary surroundings in order to prevent all suspicion of fraud; she has given sittings in New York and other places, and has paid a three months' visit to England.

Her education does not appear to have been carried very far. She has doubtless read much, like all American women, but without method, and probably very superficially. Her language is commonplace, sometimes even trivial, but the records do not give me the impression that she is really trivial-minded; language may be trivial when ideas are not. On the whole, Mrs Piper's personality is attractive.

The point which naturally interests the man of science, and particularly the doctor, is the state of health and the morbid heredity of Mrs Piper. We have very insufficient information about these. I can find no circumstantial report on this important matter anywhere. Mrs Piper was rather seriously ill in 1890; a doctor attended her for several consecutive months; this gentleman was also present at a sitting she gave on the 4th December of this same year, 1890. It is evident that he was in a position to study Mrs Piper closely. Dr Hodgson asked him for a report, which would have been appended to the other documents. But this doctor had the wisdom of the serpent. He promised, but changed his mind, and absolutely refused to furnish any report whatever. Dr Hodgson asked the subject a series of questions with the object of

ascertaining the state of health of her immediate ancestors, particularly from the neuropathic point of view. She belongs to a family which appears to have been very healthy and not in any way subject to nervous maladies.

Mrs Piper's own general state of health is even more interesting to our inquiry than that of her ancestors, since most doctors persist in seeing in mediumship a neurosis, sister or cousin to hysteria or epilepsy.

It is undeniable that many mediums present some physiological peculiarity or other. Eusapia Paladino, for example, has a depression of the left parietal bone. But, on the other hand, Mlle. Smith of Geneva, who has been studied by Professor Flournoy, seems to enjoy health as good as anybody's—even flourishing health. Perhaps, if a thorough search were made, some defect might be discovered, but the person who should not betray some inherited peculiarity probably could not be found.

As far as Mrs Piper is concerned, she seems to have enjoyed irreproachable health till towards 1882 or 1883. The exact date is not stated. About that time she suffered from a tumour, caused by a blow from a sledge, and she feared cancer. This illness brought about the discovery of her mediumship. Up to this time absolutely nothing abnormal had occurred to her. Her husband's parents had had, in 1884, a sitting with a medium which had much impressed them. They frequently advised their daughter-in-law to take the advice of some medium who gave medical consultations. To please them, she went to a blind medium named J. R. Cocke,

and there she had her first loss of consciousness or "trance." But we shall return to this.

It is to be concluded that the prescription of the medium had no more influence on the disease than those of ordinary doctors, for this tumour continued to make Mrs Piper's health rather precarious for a long time. She only decided in 1893 to undergo a surgical operation—laparotomy. No complications resulted from it, and her convalescence was rapid. However, in 1895, the after-effect of this operation was a serious hernia, which necessitated a second operation in February 1896. She only recovered thoroughly in October of the same year.

Many persons will be disposed to believe that Mrs Piper's tumour is the explanation of her mediumship, particularly as the mediumship only appeared after the tumour. It is rather difficult to prove them wrong. There is, however, a fact which seems to indicate that they would be mistaken. When Mrs Piper is ill, her mediumship decreases or becomes less lucid; she only furnishes incoherent, fragmentary, or quite false communications. The syncope or "trance," which is easy when she is well, becomes difficult or even impossible when she is ill. Her health has been good since her last operation, the syncopes are easy, and the communications obtained in this state have acquired a degree of coherence and plausibility which was previously wanting.

If, then, Mrs Piper's mediumship was the result of illness, it is strange that her recovery should have favoured the development and perfecting of this same mediumship. There appears to be a contradiction here. I am not competent regarding the

question, but, on examining the facts, I can hardly believe that mediumship is a mere neurosis. After all, are there not famous men of science who declare that genius itself is only a neurosis? In their eyes the bandit is only a sick man; but the genius also is only a sick man.

If it is true that the best and worst in humanity are only opposite faces of the same medal, we should be tempted to think mankind even more pitiable than we have hitherto believed.

CHAPTER II

Dr Richard Hodgson—Description of the trance—Mrs Piper not a good hypnotic subject.

BEFORE proceeding further, I must ask my readers' permission to introduce Dr Hodgson, the man who has studied Mrs Piper's case with the greatest care and with the most perseverance. Dr Richard Hodgson went to America expressly to observe this medium, and during some fifteen years he has, so to say, hardly lost sight of her for a moment. All the persons who have had sittings for a long time past have passed through his hands; he introduces them by assumed names, and takes all possible precautions that Mrs Piper, in her normal state, shall not obtain any information about them. These precautions are now superfluous. Mrs Piper has never had recourse to fraud, and everyone is thoroughly convinced of the fact. But the slightest relaxation of supervision would lay the most decisive experiments open to suspicion.

Dr Hodgson is one of the earliest workers for the Society for Psychical Research. He has been a terrible enemy to fraud all his life. At the time of the formation of the Society, Mme. Blavatsky, foundress of the Theosophical Society, was making herself much talked about. The most extraordinary

phenomena were supposed to have occurred at the Theosophical Society's headquarters in India. Dr Hodgson was sent there to study them impartially. He quickly made the discovery that the whole affair was charlatanry and sleight-of-hand. On his return to England he wrote a report—which has not killed Theosophy, because even new-born religions have strong vitality—but which has discredited this doctrine for ever in the eyes of thoughtful people.

After this master stroke, Dr Hodgson continued to hunt down fraudulent mediums. He learned all their tricks, and acquired a conjurer's skill. It was he again who discovered the unconscious[1] frauds of Eusapia Paladino during the sittings which this Italian medium gave at Cambridge. When such a man, after long study of Mrs Piper's phenomena, affirms their validity, we may believe him. He is not credulous, nor an enthusiast, nor a mystic. I have written of him somewhat at length, because, by force of circumstances, his name will often appear in these pages.

To return to Mrs Piper and the phenomena which specially interest us. Mrs Piper falls into trance spontaneously, without the intervention of any magnetiser. I shall explain later, at length, what must be understood by " trance."

Professor Charles Richet was one of the persons who had a sitting with our medium while she was

[1] In the opinion of the chief witnesses of the Cambridge sittings the frauds of Eusapia Paladino were not unconscious. Mr Myers said, in the report to the Society immediately after the sittings :—" I cannot doubt that we observed much conscious and deliberate fraud, of a kind which must have needed long practice to bring it to its present level of skill."—*Journal of Society for Psychical Research* for 1895, p. 133, *Trans.*

staying at Cambridge. He describes the trance in these terms:—

"She is obliged to hold someone's hand in order to go into a trance. She holds the hand several minutes, silently, in half-darkness. After some time —from five to fifteen minutes—she is seized with slight spasmodic convulsions, which increase, and terminate in a very slight epileptiform attack. Passing out of this, she falls into a state of stupor, with somewhat stertorous breathing; this lasts about a minute or two; then, all at once, she comes out of the stupor with a burst of words. Her voice is changed; she is no longer Mrs Piper, but another personage, Dr Phinuit, who speaks in a loud, masculine voice in a mingling of negro patois, French, and American dialect."

Sir Oliver Lodge, F.R.S., well-known among English men of science, and at the time Professor of Physics at Liverpool, describes the opening of the trance in very nearly the same words as Professor Richet in the remarkable report which he published in 1890 on the sittings he had with Mrs Piper. He also notices the slight epileptiform attack, although he adds that he is not "pretending to speak medically."[1]

The Phinuit personality, of which Professor Richet speaks in the passage above quoted, is what the Spiritualists call a "control." By "control" is meant the mysterious being who is supposed to have temporarily taken possession of the organism of the medium. Are these controls only secondary personalities, or are they, as they themselves declare, disincarnated human spirits, spirits of dead men who

[1] *Proc. of the S.P.R.*, vol. vi. p. 444.

come back to communicate with us by using an entranced organism as a machine? In either case they must have a name. Phinuit has been one of Mrs Piper's principal controls, but he is far from having been the only one. On the contrary, they have been legion, and, what is strange, these controls appear to be personalities as distinct from each other as possible, each with his own style of language, his belief, his opinions, his tricks of speech or manner.

Mrs Piper's trance has changed its aspect a little with the development and perfecting of her mediumship. Formerly the controls communicated only by using her voice; then some of them began to write. In some of the sittings one personality communicated through the voice, while another, entirely different, and speaking of utterly different matters, communicated simultaneously in writing. For some years now the controls have only communicated in writing, and have used the right hand only. The right arm of the medium is in lively movement, while the rest of her body lies inert, leaning forward upon cushions.

In a long report which has just appeared,[1] Mr James Hyslop, Professor of Logic and Ethics at the University of Columbia, in the State of New York, describes the beginning of the trance in detail as it now takes place. At the first sitting he had with Mrs Piper he seated himself more than a yard from her, in a position which enabled him to observe attentively all that happened.

The medium remained quietly seated in an armchair for three or four minutes. Then her head shook and her right eyebrow twitched; all this time she was

[1] *Proc. of S.P.R.*, vol. xvi.

trimming her nails. She then leant forward on the cushions which had been placed on the table for her head to rest upon, and closed and rubbed her eyes; her face was slightly congested for some instants. She opened her eyes again, and the ocular globes were visible, slightly upturned; she blew her nose, and began to attend to her nails again. Her gaze became slightly fixed. Her face once more changed; the redness disappeared, and she grew slightly pale. The muscles relaxed, the mouth was a little drawn on one side, and the stare became more fixed. Finally her mouth opened and the trance came on gently, like a fainting fit, without struggle. Then Dr Hodgson arranged her head on the cushions with her right cheek on her left hand, so that her face was turned to the left, and she was unable to see her right hand, which soon began to write automatically.

During the trance the sensibility of Mrs Piper's organism to exterior excitation is much blunted. If her arm is pricked, even severely, it is withdrawn but slowly; if a bottle of ammonia is put to her nostrils, and care is taken that it is inhaled, her head does not betray sensation by the least movement. One day, if I am not mistaken, Dr Hodgson put a lighted match to her arm, and asked Phinuit if he felt it.[1]

"Yes," replied Phinuit, "but not much, you know. What is it? Something cold, isn't it?"

These and numerous other experiments show that if sensibility is not abolished, it is at least very much blunted.

It might be concluded from the above that Mrs Piper would be an excellent hypnotic subject. She

[1] *Proc. of S.P.R.*, vol. viii. p. 5.

is nothing of the kind. Without being precisely refractory to hypnotism, she is only an indifferently good hypnotic subject. Professor William James of Harvard has made experiments to elucidate this point. His two first attempts to hypnotise Mrs Piper were entirely fruitless. Between the second and third, Professor William James asked Phinuit, during a mediumistic trance, to be kind enough to help him to make the subject hypnotisable. Phinuit promised; in fact, he always promises all that is asked. At the third attempt Mrs Piper fell slightly asleep, but only at the fifth sitting was there a real hypnotic sleep, accompanied by the usual automatic and muscular phenomena. But it was impossible to obtain anything more. Hypnosis and trance, in Mrs Piper, have no points of resemblance. In the trance, muscular mobility is extreme. In hypnosis, just the contrary is the case. If she is ordered during hypnosis to remember what she has said or done, she remembers. During the trance, the control has more than once been asked to arrange that Mrs Piper should recall, on waking, what she had said; but this has never succeeded. During the mediumistic trance she seems to read the deepest recesses of the souls of those present like a book. During hypnosis there is no trace of this thought-reading. In short, the mediumistic trance and the hypnotic sleep are not one and the same thing. Whatever may be the real nature of the difference, this difference is so great that it strikes the least attentive observer at once.

CHAPTER III

Early trances—Careful first observations by Professor William James of Harvard University, Massachusetts, U.S.A.

I HAVE already explained on what occasion Mrs Piper had her first trance. Suffering from a traumatic tumour, she had gone to ask advice of a blind medium named Cocke. This medium gave medical consultations, but he also asserted that he had the power of developing latent mediumship. At this first sitting Mrs Piper felt very strange thrills, and thought she was going to faint. At the following sitting Mr Cocke put his hands on her head. She felt at once that she was on the point of losing consciousness. She saw a flood of light, as well as unrecognised human faces, and a hand which fluttered before her face. She does not remember what happened afterwards. But when she woke she was told that a young Indian girl named *Chlorine* had manifested through her organism, and had given a remarkable proof of survival after death to a person who happened to be present.

Mrs Piper was therefore really a medium. Her personal friends immediately began to arrange sittings with her. Little by little strangers were ad-

mitted to this private circle. Various self-styled spirits communicated by her means in the earlier days. Phinuit, who later took almost sole possession of Mrs Piper's organism, was far from being alone at first; his place was disputed. The first controls, if they themselves are to be believed, were the actress Mrs Siddons, the musician John Sebastian Bach, the poet Longfellow, Commodore Vanderbilt the multi-millionaire, and a young Italian girl named Loretta Ponchini.

At the outset Dr Phinuit, when he appeared, confined himself to diagnosing and giving medical advice. He thought everything else beneath him.

At last, one evening, John Sebastian Bach announced that he and all his companions were about to concentrate their power on Dr Phinuit, and make him the principal control. Naturally we do not know what they did, but it is certain that from that time Dr Phinuit became so much the principal control that he had almost sole possession of Mrs Piper's organism for years. As we shall see, he ceased to confine himself to giving medical consultations. He willingly replied to all questions addressed to him, and he even talked readily on all sorts of subjects without being questioned at all.

The first person of educated intelligence who had an opportunity to examine and study, although somewhat summarily, Mrs Piper's trance phenomena, was Professor William James of Harvard University. In 1886 he made a brief report of them, which he published in the *Proceedings of the American Society for Psychical Research.* Professor James did not at first recognise all the importance of the Piper case.

No shorthand report of the sittings was made, and he did not even take complete notes. However, he assured himself that fraud had nothing to do with the phenomena, but without taking all the minute precautions which others have since taken. He satisfied himself that here was an interesting mystery, and says so in his report, but he left the charge of looking for the key to others. But I shall give an account of the sittings of Professor James, in the first place because it would be improper to neglect even the superficial studies of a man of such eminence, and secondly, because they will give my readers a clear idea of the phenomena.[1]

Professor James made Mrs Piper's acquaintance in the autumn of 1885 in the following way. His mother-in-law, Mrs Gibbens, had heard a friend speak of Mrs Piper, and as she had never seen a medium, she asked for a sitting out of curiosity. Mrs Gibbens, who went sceptical, returned rather impressed. She had heard a number of private details which she believed were unknown outside her family. On the day following Professor James's sister-in-law went in her turn to see Mrs Piper, and obtained even better results than her mother. For example, the inquirer had placed a letter in Italian on the medium's forehead. It must be observed that Mrs Piper is entirely ignorant of that language. Nevertheless, Phinuit gave a number of perfectly correct details about the writer of the letter. The mystery became interesting, as the young Italian who had written it was only known to two people in the whole United States. Later on, at other sittings,

[1] *Proc. of S.P.R.*, vol. vi. p. 651.

Phinuit gave the exact name of this young man, which he had been unable to do at first.

Professor James's attitude when these facts were related to him can be imagined. He did what most of us do, or have done. He played the *esprit fort*, joked his relatives about their credulity, and thought that women were decidedly deficient in critical spirit. His curiosity was none the less awakened. Some days after, in the company of his wife, and having taken all possible precautions that Mrs Piper should not know his name or intentions beforehand, he went and asked her for a sitting. Intimate details, principally about Mrs James's family, were repeated. Others even more circumstantial were given. What was the least easily obtained was just what could have been learned with the greatest facility if Mrs Piper had acquired these details fraudulently or by normal means, namely, proper names. Professor James was the first to notice a fact which a large number of observers have since remarked. The impression that the names are shouted to Phinuit by a spirit is unavoidable. Phinuit, who is to transmit them, hears imperfectly, doubtless on account of his position, which all the controls describe as very uncomfortable and painful —the organism of the medium seems to plunge the controls into a semi-somnolence.

Thus Phinuit mangles the names he repeats. It appears that the communicating spirit is conscious of this and corrects. Phinuit repeats the name thus several times, and very often only succeeds in giving it exactly after several attempts. It even sometime happens that a name cannot be given all at

a sitting, but then it is generally given at a subsequent one.

Thus, at this first sitting of Professor James, the name of his father-in-law, *Gibbens*, was first given as *Niblin*, and then as *Giblin*. Professor James had lost a child a year before. He was mentioned, and his name, *Herman*, was given as *Herrin*. But the details which accompanied the enunciation of the name prevented mistake, on the part of the sitters, about the person intended.

Professor James brought away from this first sitting the conclusion that unless Mrs Piper, by some chance inexplicable to him, knew his own and his wife's families intimately, she must be possessed of supernormal powers. In short, his first scepticism was shaken, and he had twelve further sittings with Mrs Piper in the course of the winter. Moreover, he obtained circumstantial details from relatives and friends who likewise had sittings.

The following are some examples of Phinuit's clairvoyance.[1]

Professor James's mother-in-law had, on her return from Europe, lost her bank-book. At a sitting held soon afterwards Phinuit was asked if he could help her to find it. He told her exactly where it was, and there it was found.

At another sitting, Phinuit said to Professor James, who this time was not accompanied by Mrs James, "Your child has a boy named Robert F. as a playfellow in our world." The Fs. were cousins of Mrs James, who lived in a distant town.

On returning home Professor James said to his

[1] *Proc. of S.P.R.*, vol. vi. p. 657.

wife, "Your cousins the Fs. have lost a child, haven't they? But Phinuit made a mistake about the sex; he said it was a boy." Mrs James confirmed the perfect exactness of Phinuit's information; her husband had been wrong.

At the second sitting which Mrs Gibbens had she was told among other things that one of her daughters, mentioned by name, had at the time a bad pain in her back, to which she was by no means subject. The detail was found to be exact.

On another occasion Phinuit announced to Mrs James and her brother, before the arrival of any telegram, the death of their aunt, which had just occurred in New York. It is true that this death was momentarily expected.

At another sitting Phinuit said to Professor James, "You have just killed a grey and white cat with ether. The wretched animal spun round and round a long time before dying." This was quite true.

Phinuit, again, told Mrs James that her aunt in New York, the one whose death he had announced, had written her a letter warning her against all kinds of mediums. And he sketched the old lady's character, not very respectfully, in a most amusing way.

I quote these examples to give an idea of the kind of information furnished by Mrs Piper's controls. But it must not be believed that this is all. The controls do not need to be entreated to speak. Phinuit is particularly loquacious, and he often talks for an hour on end. His remarks are frequently incoherent, and often also obviously false. But, at the very least, in the good sittings, truthfulness and exactitude much preponderate, whatever may be the source from which

Phinuit obtains his facts; whether he gets them from disincarnated spirits, as he asserts; whether he reads them in the consciousness or sub-consciousness of the sitter, or whether they are furnished him by what he calls the "influence" which the persons to whom the objects presented to him belonged have left upon them.

I have forgotten to say that Phinuit asks to have brought to him objects of some sort which have belonged to the persons about whom he is consulted. He feels the objects, and says at once, "I feel the influence of such-a-one; he is dead or he is alive; such a thing has happened to him." Detail follows on detail, for the most part exact.

As I have already said when speaking of Professor James, Phinuit showed intimate knowledge of Mrs James's family. Now, there were no members of the family in the neighbourhood; some were dead, others in California, and others in the State of Maine.

What I have said will suffice to give the reader a first idea of the general features of the phenomena. I shall be able in future, while reporting the facts, to examine as I proceed the hypotheses which they suggest.

CHAPTER IV

The hypothesis of fraud—The hypothesis of muscle reading—"Influence."

WHEN phenomena of this nature are related, the first hypothesis that occurs to the reader's mind is that of fraud. The medium is an impostor. His trick may be ingenious and carefully dissimulated, but it is certainly merely a trick. Therefore, in order to pursue these studies with any good results, this hypothesis must be disposed of once for all. Now this is not easy. Most men are so made that they have a high opinion of their own perspicuity, but a very unfavourable one generally of that of other men. They always believe that if they had been there they could have quickly discovered the imposture. Consequently, no precaution must be omitted; all safeguards must be employed, and it will be seen that the observers of Mrs Piper's phenomena have not neglected to do this.

Professor James concealed the identity of as many as he could of the sitters whom he introduced to Mrs Piper. Personally, he was soon convinced that fraud had nothing to do with the phenomena. But the point was to convince others. It occured to a member of the Society for Psychical Research that it

would be a good plan to cause Mrs Piper to be followed by detectives when she went out, and not only herself, but all the other members of her family. A singular idea, in my opinion. However, if detectives had not been employed, many people would even to-day believe that it would be possible to clear up the Piper mystery in a very short time, in the most natural way in the world. This is why Dr Hodgson, on his arrival in America, set detectives on the tracks of Mr and Mrs Piper. Absolutely nothing was discovered; Mr and Mrs Piper asked nobody indiscreet questions, made no suspicious journeys, did not visit cemeteries to read the names on graves. Finally, Mrs Piper, whose correspondence is at all times limited, received no letters from Intelligence Agencies.

Later on, the method taken to make sure of her good faith was revealed to Mrs Piper. She was not at all offended; on the contrary, she saw how absolutely legitimate was the precaution. This is another proof of her uprightness and intelligence.

Again, the idea that Mrs Piper could obtain the information she gives by means of inquiries made abroad is *à priori* absurd to anyone who has studied the phenomena with any care. Her sitters, whom she received under assumed names, to the number of several hundreds, came from all points of the United States, from England, and even from other parts of Europe. The greater number passed through the hands of Professor James and Dr Hodgson, and all necessary precautions were taken that Mrs Piper should see them for the first time only a few

moments before the commencement of the trance. Indeed, they were often only introduced after the trance had begun. These precautions have never injured the results. The sittings, at least those which were not spoilt by the medium's state of health, have always been marked by a large number of perfectly accurate details.

If Mrs Piper obtained the information through spies in her employment, these spies would be obliged to send her private details about all the families in the United States and Europe, since she hardly ever knows to whom she will give a sitting the next day. Dr Hodgson arranges for her. Formerly Professor James did this, at least in a large number of cases. Now the scientific honesty of Dr Hodgson or Professor James (I mention this only for foreign readers who may not be acquainted with the reputation of these two gentlemen) can no more be suspected than that of a Charcot, a Berthelot, or a Pasteur. Then, what interest could they have in deceiving us? These experiments had cost them considerable sums, not to speak of time and trouble; they have never profited by them.

Again, Mrs Piper is without fortune. She would not have the means to pay such a police as she would need. She is paid for her sittings, it is true; she gains about two hundred pounds a year, but such a police service would cost her thousands. But there was an excellent way of putting the hypothesis of fraud out of question; it was to take Mrs Piper out of her habitual environment, to a country where she knew nobody. This was done. Certain members of the Society for Psychical Research invited her to

England, to give sittings in their houses. She consented without any difficulty. She arrived in England on 19th November 1889, on the Cunard Company's steamer *Scythia*. Frederic Myers, whose recent loss is deplored by psychology, should have gone to the docks and have taken her to his house at Cambridge. But at the last moment he was called to Edinburgh, and asked his friend, Professor Oliver Lodge, of whom we have already spoken, to receive Mrs Piper in his stead. Professor Lodge installed her in an hotel with her two little girls who came with her. The same evening Mr Myers arrived, and took her to his house next day.

Experiments at Cambridge began at once. This is what Mr Myers says about them :— [1]

"I am convinced that Mrs Piper, on her arrival in England, brought with her a very slender knowledge of English affairs or English people. The servant who attended on her and on her two young children was chosen by myself, and was a young woman from a country village whom I had full reason to believe both trustworthy and also quite ignorant of my own or my friends' affairs. For the most part I had myself not determined upon the persons whom I would invite to sit with her. I chose these sitters in great measure by chance; several of them were not resident in Cambridge, and except in one or two cases, where anonymity would have been hard to preserve, I brought them to her under false names, sometimes introducing them only when the trance had already begun."

Professor Oliver Lodge in his turn invited Mrs Piper

[1] *Proc. of S.P.R.*, vol. vi. p. 438.

to come and give sittings at his home in Liverpool. She went, and remained from 18th December to 27th December 1889. During this time she gave at least two sittings a day, which fatigued her much. Professor Lodge gave up for the time all other work to study her. He enumerates at length all the precautions he took to prevent fraud. He also declares that Mrs Piper, who was perfectly aware of the watch kept upon her, never showed the least displeasure, and thought it quite natural. He wondered whether, by chance, she might not have among her luggage some book containing biographies of men of the day, and asked permission to look through her trunks. She consented with the best possible grace. But Professor Lodge found nothing suspicious. Mrs Piper also handed over to be read the greater number of the letters she received; they were not numerous; about three a week. The servants in the house were all new; they knew nothing of the family's private affairs, and thus could not inform the medium about them. Besides, Mrs Piper never tried to question them. Mrs Lodge, who was very sceptical at first, kept guard over her own speech, so as not to give any scraps of information. The family Bible (on the first pages of which, according to custom, memorable events are recorded) and the photographic albums were locked away. Professor Lodge, like the others, presented most of his sitters under false names. Finally, he affirms that Mrs Piper's attitude never justified the least suspicion; she was dignified, reserved, and not in any way indiscreet.

In short, during the fifteen years the experiments have continued, all the suggestions made by sceptical

and sometimes violent objectors have been kept in view, that the fraud might be discovered, if fraud there were. All has been in vain. The explanation of the phenomena must consequently be sought elsewhere.

As for the trance itself, all those who have seen it agree in saying that it is genuine and in no way feigned.

The hypothesis of fraud being disposed of, recourse has been had to another, which it has also become necessary to abandon—that of the reading of muscular movements. It appears that the thought-readers who exhibit themselves on the platform accomplish their wonderful feats by interpreting, with remarkable intelligence, sharpened by long practice, the unconscious movements of the persons whose wrists they are holding.

Now it is true that formerly Mrs Piper became entranced while holding both hands, or at least one hand, of the sitter. She kept their hands in hers during most of the trance. But Professor Lodge says this was far from being always the case. She often dropped the sitter's hands and lost contact with them for half an hour at a time. Phinuit, or some other control, nevertheless continued to furnish exact information. Shall we say that while he was holding hands he had laid in a provision of knowledge for the whole half-hour? Seriously we cannot.

But as this objection had often been made, the sitters endeavoured to avoid contact with the medium. For a long time Mrs Piper has fallen into the trance without holding anyone's hand. Her whole body reposes, plunged in a deep sleep, except the right

hand, which writes with giddy rapidity and only rarely endeavours to touch the persons present. Professor Hyslop, in the report which has just appeared,[1] affirms that he avoided the slightest contact with the medium with all possible care, and yet we shall see farther on how exact were the facts he obtained, since he believes that he has established the identity of his dead father without the possibility of a doubt. Therefore the hypothesis of thought-reading by means of muscular indications must also be put aside.

Finally, Phinuit affirms that the objects presented to him, and which he touches, furnish him with information about their former possessors, thanks to the "influence" such persons have left on the articles; and in a multitude of cases we should be almost forced to admit that it may be so. But here we are already plunged into depths of mystery. What can this "influence" be? We know nothing about it. Must we believe in it? Must we believe Phinuit when he says that he obtains his information sometimes from the "influence" left upon the objects, sometimes directly from the mouths of the disembodied spirits? Before reaching that point, other hypotheses must be examined.

[1] *Proc. of S.P.R.*, vol. xvi.

CHAPTER V

A sitting with Mrs Piper—The hypothesis of thought-transference—Incidents.

THE reader may not be displeased to have a specimen of these strange conversations between human beings and the invisible beings, who assert that they are the disincarnated spirits of those who day by day quit this world of woe. It will not be difficult to give the reader a specimen of them. At least one half of the fourteen or fifteen hundred pages dedicated to the Piper case in the *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research* are composed of reports of sittings, either taken down in shorthand or given in great detail. In some of these reports even the most insignificant exclamations of those present are noted.

I have chosen the 47th of the sittings which took place in England, not because it is peculiarly interesting, but because Professor Lodge's published report of it is not too long, and I have no room for more extended developments.

The account of this sitting will perhaps disappoint some readers. "What!" they will say, "is that all that spirits who return from the other world have to say to us? They talk as we do. They speak of the

same things. They are not spirits." This conclusion would perhaps be too hasty. I do not assert that they are spirits or that they return from another world. I know nothing about it. But if this other world existed we should expect that there would not be an abyss between it and our own. Nature makes no leaps. That is surely a true principle in, and for, all worlds.

We have a means, although an imperfect one, of endeavouring to discover if the communicators are really returning spirits. It is to ask them to prove their identity by relating as large a number of facts as possible concerning their life upon earth. The investigators of the Piper case have for fifteen years devoted themselves to this task, apparently easy, in reality difficult and ungrateful.

In the earlier experiments in the Piper case the conversation almost always takes place between the sitters and Dr Phinuit. Dr Phinuit does not willingly give up his post, though he does so sometimes. When he is giving information which he says he has received from other spirits he sometimes talks in the third person; sometimes, on the contrary, he reports word for word in the first person. This detail must not be forgotten in reading the reports. The following is a report of the 47th sitting in England.

The sitters are Professor Oliver Lodge and his brother Alfred Lodge. The latter takes notes. The phrases between parentheses are remarks made by Professor Lodge after the sitting.[1]

[1] For detailed report of these sittings see *Proc. of S.P.R.*, vol. vi.

PHINUIT—"Captain,[1] do you know that as I came[2] I met the medium going out, and she's crying. Why is that?"

O. L.—"Well, the fact is she's separated from her children for a few days and she is feeling rather low about it."

PHINUIT.—"How are you, Alfred? I've your mother's influence strong. (Pause.) By George! that's Aunt Anne's ring (feeling ring I had put on my hand just before sitting) given over to you. And Olly dear,[3] that's one of the last things I ever gave you. It was one of the last things I said to you in the body when I gave it you for Mary. I said, 'For her, through you.'" [This is precisely accurate.]

O. L.—"Yes, I remember perfectly."

PHINUIT.—"I tell you I know it, I shall never forget it. Keep it in memory of me, for I am not dead. Each spirit is not so dim (?) that it cannot recollect its belongings in the body. They attract us if there has been anything special about them. I tell you, my boy, I can see it just as plain as if I were in the body. It was the last thing I gave you, for her, through you, always in remembrance of me." (Further conversation and advice ending, "Convince yourself,[4] and let others do the same. We are all liable to mistakes, but you can see for yourself. There's a gentleman wants to speak to you.")

[1] At the first sitting in Liverpool there was some talk of a sea captain. Phinuit, who was rather fond of nicknames, jocularly attached the epithet "Captain" to Professor Lodge.

[2] *I.e.*, "As I entered the medium's organism."

[3] Here Phinuit is supposed to be reporting in the first person words of Aunt Anne, treated as if present.

[4] Of a future life.

Mr E,[1]—"Lodge, how are you? I tell you I'm living, not dead. That's me. You know me, don't you?"

O. L.—"Yes, delighted to see you again."

Mr E.—"Don't give it up,[2] Lodge. Cling to it. It's the best thing you have. It's coarse in the beginning, but it can be ground down fine. You'll know best and correct (?). It can only come through a trance. You have to put her in a trance. You've got to do it that way to make yourself known."

O. L.—"Is it bad for the medium?"

Mr E.—"It's the only way, Lodge. In one sense it's bad, but in another it's good. It's her work. If I take possession of the medium's body and she goes out, then I can use her organism to tell the world important truths. There is an infinite power above us. Lodge, believe it fully. Infinite over all, most marvellous. One can tell a medium, she's like a ball of light. You look as dark and material as possible, but we find two or three lights shining. It's like a series of rooms with candles at one end. Must use analogy to express it. When you need a light you use it, when you have finished you put it out. They are like transparent windows to see through. Lodge, it's a puzzle. It's a puzzle to us here in a way, though we understand it better than you. I work at it hard. I do. I'd give anything I

[1] Phinuit seems to have left, and Mr E. takes his place. This Mr E. was an intimate friend of Professor Lodge; he had appeared at a preceding sitting and had offered proofs of his identity, which were verified later. Professor Lodge recognised his mode of address. Phinuit, we remember, always addressed Professor Lodge as Captain."

[2] The investigation into psychic matters.

possess to find out. I don't care for material things now, our interest is much greater. I'm studying hard how to communicate; it's not easy. But it's only a matter of a short time before I shall be able to tell the world all sorts of things through one medium or another. [And so on for some time.] Lodge, keep up your courage, there's a quantity to hope for yet. Hold it up for a time. Don't be in a hurry. Get facts; no matter what they call you, go on investigating. Test to fullest. Assure yourself, then publish. It will be all right in the end—no question about it. It's true."

O. L.—"You have seen my Uncle Jerry, haven't you?"[1]

Mr E.—"Yes, I met him a little while ago—a very clever man—had an interesting talk with him."

O. L.—"What sort of person is this Dr Phinuit?"

Mr E.—"Dr Phinuit is a peculiar type of man. He goes about continually, and is thrown in with everybody. He is eccentric and quaint, but good-hearted. I wouldn't do the things he does for anything. He lowers himself sometimes—it's a great pity. He has very curious ideas about things and people; he receives a great deal about people from themselves (?), and he gets expressions and phrases that one doesn't care for—vulgar phrases he picks up by meeting uncanny people through the medium. These things tickle him, and he goes about repeating them. He has to interview a great number of people, and has no easy berth of it. A high type of man couldn't do the work he does. But he is a good-hearted old fellow. Good-bye, Lodge! Here's the doctor coming."

[1] In accordance with a statement previously made by Phinuit.

O. L.—"Good-bye, E.! Glad to have had a chat with you."

[*Doctor's voice reappears.*][1]

PHINUIT—"This [ring] belongs to your aunt. Your Uncle Jerry tells me to ask. . . . By the way, do you know Mr E.'s been here; did you hear him?"

O. L.—"Yes, I've had a long talk with him."

PHINUIT—"Wants you to ask Uncle Bob about his cane. He whittled it out himself. It has a crooked handle with ivory on the top. Bob has it, and has cut initials in it." [There is a stick, but description inaccurate.] "He has the skin also, and the ring. And he remembers Bob killing the cat and tying its tail to the fence to see him kick before he died. He and Bob and a lot of the fellows all together in Smith's field, I think he said. Bob knew Smith. And the way they played tit-tat-too on the window pane on All Hallows' Eve, and they got caught that night too." (At Barking, where my uncles lived as children, there is a field called Smith's field, but my Uncle does not remember the cat incident.) "Aunt Anne wants to know about her sealskin cloak. Who was it went to Finland, or Norway?"

O. L.—"Don't know."

PHINUIT.—"Do you know Mr Clark—a tall, dark man, in the body?"[2]

O. L.—"I think so."

PHINUIT.—"His brother wants to send his love to him. Your Uncle Jerry, do you know, has been talk-

[1] These changes in the medium's voice are very surprising. If there is fraud in the case, Mrs Piper must be the most accomplished actress who has hitherto appeared.

[2] *I.e.*, still living.

ing to Mr E. They have become very friendly. E. has been explaining things to him. Uncle Jerry says he will tell all the facts, and all about families near, and so on, that he can recall. He says if you will remember all this and tell his brother, he will know. If he doesn't fully understand he must come and see me himself, and I will tell him. How's Mary?"[1]

O. L.—"Middling; not very well."

PHINUIT.—"Glad she's going away." [She was, to the Continent; but Mrs Piper knew it.] "William[2] is glad. His wife used to be very distressed about him. You remember his big chair where he used to sit and think?"

O. L.—"Yes, very well."

PHINUIT.—"He often goes and sits there now.[3] Takes it easy, he says. He used to sit opposite a window sometimes with his head in his hands, and think and think and think." (This was at his office.) "He has grown younger in looks, and much happier. It was Alec that fell through a hole in the boat, Alexander Marshall, her first father."[4] (Correct, as before.) "Where's Thompson? The one that lost the purse?"

O. L.—"Yes, I know."

PHINUIT.—"Well, I met his brother, and he sent love to all—to sister Fanny, he told me especially.

[1] Mrs Lodge. [2] Mrs Lodge's step-father.

[3] These assertions, that spirits return to the places they have lived in, and unknown to us, do what they were accustomed to do, are very odd. But the literature of the subject is full of such accounts.

[4] Mrs Lodge's father. Phinuit had alluded to this accident in a previous sitting, but without being able to explain if it had happened to Mrs Lodge's father or her step-father.

He tried to say it just as he was going out, but had no time—was too weak."

O. L.—"Oh, yes, we just heard him."

PHINUIT.—"Oh, you did? That's all right. She's an angel; he has seen her to-day. Tell Ike I'm very grateful to him. Tell Ike the girls will come out all right. Ted's mother and . . . And how's Susie? Give Susie my love."

O. L.—"I couldn't find that Mr Stevenson you gave me a message to. What's his name?"

PHINUIT.—"What! little Minnie Stevenson? Don't you know his name is Henry? Yes, Henry Stevenson. Mother in spirit too, not far away.[1] Give me that watch." (Trying to open it.) "Here, open it. Take it out of its case. Jerry says he took his knife once and made some little marks with it up here, up here near the handle, near the ring, some little cuts in the watch. Look at it afterwards in a good light and you will see them." (There is a little engraved landscape in the place described, but some of the sky-lines have been cut unnecessarily deep, I think, apparently out of mischief or idleness. Certainly I knew nothing of this, and had never had the watch out of its case before.—O. J. L.)

This example shows the kind of information given. Much of it is true; other assertions are unverifiable, which does not prove that they are untrue; others contain both truth and errors; finally, there are certainly some which are entirely untrue. For this reason these transcendental conversations very much resemble the conversations of incarnated human

[1] In these communications the self-styled spirits always affirm that the dead get farther and farther by degrees from our universe, in accordance with time, and their own progress. The Stevenson episode, referred to above, is described on page 71.

beings. *Errare humanum est.* And it would appear that the heavy corpse we drag about with us is not alone to blame when we sacrifice to Error.

But, since the hypothesis of fraud and of unconscious muscular movement may not be invoked, where shall we find the source of the mass of exact information Mrs Piper gives us? The simplest hypothesis, after those we have been obliged to set aside, consists in believing that the medium obtains her information from the minds of those present. She must be able to read their souls, as others read in a book; thought-transference must take place between her and them. With these data, she would be supposed to construct marionettes so perfect, so life-like, that a large number of sitters leave the sittings persuaded that they have communicated with their dead relatives. If this were true, the fact alone would be a miracle. No genius, neither the divine Homer, nor the calm Tacitus, nor Shakespeare, would have been a creator of men to compare with Mrs Piper. Even were it thus, science would never have met with a subject more worthy of its attention than this woman. But the greater number of those who have had sittings with Mrs Piper affirm that the information furnished was not in their consciousness. If they themselves furnished it, the medium must have taken it, not from their consciousness, but from their subconsciousness, from the most hidden depths of their souls, from that abyss in which lie buried, far out of our reach, facts which have occupied our minds for a moment even very superficially, and have left therein, it appears, indelible traces.

Thus the mystery grows deeper and deeper. But

this is not all. At every moment Mrs Piper gives the sitters details which they maintain that they never could have known. Consequently she must read them instantaneously in the minds of persons, sometimes very far distant, who do know them. This is the telepathic hypothesis, upon which for the moment we will not insist, for we shall be obliged to study it carefully later on.

Professor Lodge has made a list, necessarily incomplete, of incidents mentioned by the medium in the English sittings which the sitters had entirely forgotten, or which they had every reason to suppose they had never known, or which it was impossible they should ever have known. This list contains forty-two such incidents. To give my readers some idea of their nature, I will quote four or five of them. I will take these incidents from the history of the Lodge family, in order to avoid introducing new personages unnecessarily.

At the 16th sitting,[1] on November 30, 1889, Phinuit tells Professor Lodge that one of his sons has something wrong in the calf of his leg. Now at the time the child was merely complaining of pain in his heel when he walked. The doctor consulted had pronounced it rheumatism, and this was vaguely running in Dr Lodge's mind. However, some time after the sitting, in May 1890, the pain localised itself in the calf. Now there could be no auto-suggestion in this case, for Professor Lodge tells us he had said nothing to his son.

At the 44th sitting,[2] Professor Lodge asked his Uncle Jerry, who is supposed to be communicating,

[1] *Proc. of S.P.R.*, vol. vi. p. 467. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 503.

"Do you remember anything when you were young?" Phinuit (for him) replies at once, "Yes, I pretty nigh got drowned. Tried to swim the creek, and we fellows all of us got into a little boat. We got tipped over. He will remember it. Ask Bob if he remembers that about swimming the creek; he ought to remember it." Uncle Robert, consulted, remembers the incident perfectly, but gives different details. This sort of confusion about the details of a distant event, the partial memory, occurs often to all of us.

Thus disincarnated beings would seem to resemble incarnate ones on this point also. Apparently it was not the boat which upset, but the two young Lodges, Jerry and Robert, on getting out of it, began some horse-play on the bank, and fell into the stream. They were obliged to swim, fully dressed and against a strong current, which was carrying them under a mill-wheel.

At the 46th sitting,[1] Phinuit reports that the last visit the father of Professor Lodge paid was to this Uncle Robert, and that he didn't feel very well. Professor Lodge knew nothing of this fact, or, if he had once known it, had so completely forgotten it that he was obliged to apply to one of his cousins to know if it was true. The cousin replied in confirmation of the fact.

At the 82nd sitting,[2] Uncle Jerry, speaking of his brother Frank, who is still living, expresses himself thus about an event of their childhood,—

"Yes, certainly! Frank was full of life; he crawled under the thatch once and hid. What a lot of mischief he was capable of doing. He would do any-

[1] *Proc. of S.P.R.*, vol. vi. p. 514. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 549.

thing; go without shirt, swop hats, anything. There was a family near named Rodney. He pounded one of their boys named John. Frank got the best of it, and the boy ran; how he ran! His father threatened Frank, but he escaped; he always escaped. He could crawl through a smaller hole than another. He could shin up a tree quick as a monkey. What a boy he was! I remember his fishing. I remember that boy wading up to his middle. I thought he'd catch his death of cold; but he never did."

This Uncle Frank was aged about 80, and was living in Cornwall: the general description is characteristic. Professor Lodge wrote to him to ask if the above details were correct. He replied, giving exact details: "I recollect very well my fight with a boy in the corn field. It took place when I was ten years old, and I suppose a bit of a boy-bully."

On the 29th November[1] Professor Henry Sidgwick, of Cambridge, had a sitting with Mrs Piper. It was arranged that Mrs Sidgwick, who stayed at home, should do something specially marked during the sitting. Mrs Piper was to be asked to describe it, to prove her power of seeing at a distance. Phinuit, when questioned, replied, "She is sitting in a large chair, she is talking to another lady, and she is wearing something on her head." These details were perfectly correct. Mrs Sidgwick was sitting in a large chair, talking to Miss Alice Johnson, and she had a blue handkerchief on her head. However, Phinuit was wrong about the description of the room in which this happened.

[1] *Proc. of S.P.R.*, p. 627.

CHAPTER VI

Phinuit—His probable origin—His character—What he says of himself—His French—His medical diagnosis—Is he merely a secondary personality of Mrs Piper?

An interesting question arises at the point we have reached—"What is Phinuit? Whence his name? Whence does he come? Should we believe that he is a disincarnated human spirit, as he himself obstinately affirms, or must we think him a secondary personality of Mrs Piper?" If he is a spirit, that spirit is not endowed with a love of truth, as we shall see, and on this point he too much resembles many of ourselves. In any case we may notice in passing the obstinacy of these controls in wishing to pass for disincarnated spirits; the fact is at least worthy of attention. I am willing to allow that this may be a suggestion imposed by the medium on her secondary personalities; but I ask myself why this suggestion can never be annulled. Numerous efforts have been made, above all in the case of Phinuit; they have ended only in provoking jests from the disincarnated doctor, who absolutely insists on remaining a spirit. However this may be, we will here endeavour to discover the origin of this control.

It will not have been forgotten that Mrs Piper's mediumship blossomed forth, if I may thus express myself, during the sittings she had with the blind medium J. R. Cocke. Now this medium was then, and has, I believe, always since been, controlled by a certain doctor called Albert G. Finnett, a French doctor of the old school which produced Sangrado. This old barber-surgeon, as his medium calls him, is very modest. He says that he is "nobody particular"; I hope he does not mean to say that he resembles Jules Verne's Captain Nemo. There is a considerable resemblance between this name Finnett and the English pronunciation of Phinuit. Therefore we may well inquire whether the medium Cocke, when developing Mrs Piper's mediumship, may not also have made her a present of his control. Dr Hodgson has questioned Phinuit on this point several times. But Phinuit asserts that he does not know what is meant, and that Mrs Piper's is the first human organism through which he has manifested. I will not try to settle the question.

If Phinuit has not varied about his own name, he has certainly varied in its orthography. Till 1887, whenever he consented to sign his name, he signed Phinnuit, with two *n*'s. Dr Hodgson accuses himself of being the originator of the orthographic variation. He carelessly took the habit of writing Phinuit with one *n*, and gave this orthography to his friends. Mrs Piper, in the normal state, often had occasion to see the name thus written. And so, in the first half of 1888, Phinuit also began to write his name with one *n*. Dr Hodgson only discovered the mistake later on looking over his notes.

The reader will perhaps be astonished that I speak of the Phinuit personality as if it were already established that the hypothetical doctor were really a spirit; that is to say, a personality as distinct from that of the medium as the reader and I are from one another. I must hold this point in reserve. The investigators of the Piper case, finding as decided a difference between the controls and the subject in a normal state as exists between individuals of flesh and blood, have adopted the language of these controls for convenience' sake, while warning us that, in so doing, they have no intention of prejudging their nature. I do, and shall continue to do, the same. There is no impropriety in this so long as it is well understood.

To return to Phinuit's character. This doctor in the Beyond is not a bad fellow; on the contrary, he is very obliging, and his chief desire is to please everybody. He repeats all he is asked to repeat, makes all the gestures suggested to him by the communicators in order that they may be recognised; even those of a little child. In his rather deep voice he sings to a weeping mother the nursery song or the lullaby which she sang to her sick child, if the song will serve as a proof of identity. I find at least one such case in Dr Hodgson's report. The couplet sung was probably well-known to Mrs Piper; it is a common one. But as this song had often been sung during her last illness by the child who was communicating, and as it was the last she sang upon earth, the coincidence is at least surprising. Probably Mrs Piper took the air and the words from the source whence she takes so many other details—a source unknown to us.

However, if Dr Phinuit is good-hearted, he is also occasionally deplorably trivial. His language is rarely elevated, and his expressions are almost always vulgar. On occasion he does not dislike a joke or a touch of humour. Thus we have seen that he mischievously persisted in addressing Professor Lodge as "Captain." On another occasion he is a long time in finding a person's name—Theodora. Then he adds, mockingly, "Hum! it is a fine name once one has got hold of it." This does not prevent Phinuit from altering Theodora into Theosophy, and calling the person in question Theosophy! I could easily give other examples of Phinuit's wit. But on this point I must remark that the word "Theosophy" astonishes me in Phinuit's mouth, even when he is making a joking use of it. Evidently Mrs Piper knows the name and the thing well. But at the time when Dr Phinuit attended his contemporaries in flesh and blood, there was, I believe, no question of Theosophy, nor of its foundress, Madame Blavatsky. There was indeed a sect of Theosophists at the end of the eighteenth century, but it was very obscure.

Dr Phinuit is, besides, very proud of his exploits. He likes to make people believe that he knows and sees everything. Indeed, perhaps it is because he likes to seem not to be ignorant of anything that he sometimes asserts so many controverted facts. And this is to be deplored; for how much more useful service he would render if his facts were not doubtful! Unluckily, this is far from being the case. Phinuit occasionally seems to tell falsehoods deliberately. This has been made evident when he has been asked

to prove his identity by giving details of his terrestrial life.

In December 1889,[1] he replies to Professor Alfred Lodge, the brother of Professor Oliver Lodge,—

"I have been from thirty to thirty-five years in spirit, I think. I died when I was seventy, of leprosy; very disagreeable. I had been to Australia and Switzerland. My wife's name was Mary Latimer. I had a sister Josephine. John was my father's name. I studied medicine at Metz, where I took my degree at thirty years old, married at thirty-five. Look up the town of ——, also the Hôtel Dieu in Paris. I was born at Marseilles, am a Southern French gentleman. Find out a woman named Carey. Irish. Mother Irish; father French. I had compassion on her in the hospital. My name is John Phinuit Schlevelle (or Clavelle), but I was always called Dr Phinuit. Do you know Dr Clinton Perry? Find him at Dupuytren, and this woman at the Hôtel Dieu. There's a street named Dupuytren, a great street for doctors. . . . This is my business now, to communicate with those in the body, and make them believe our existence."

I think a bad choice was made of Dr Phinuit to fill this part. The information he here gives us about himself does not bear marks of absolute sincerity. We might say he was an Englishman or American trying to pass himself off for a Frenchman to his fellow-countrymen, and having a very small acquaintance with France and French affairs. And if he had even stopped there! But no. He has often contradicted himself. He tells Dr Hodgson[2] that his name

[1] *Proc. of S.P.R.*, vol. vi. p. 520. [2] *Ibid.*, vol. viii. p. 50.

is Jean Phinuit Scliville. He could not tell the date of his birth or death. But, on comparing the facts he gives, we might conclude that he was born in 1790, and that he died in 1860. He tells Dr Hodgson that he studied medicine in Paris, at a college called *Merciana* or *Meerschaum*, he does not know exactly which. He adds that he also studied medicine at "Metz in Germany." It is no longer he who had a sister named Josephine; it is his wife. "Josephine," he says, "was a sweetheart of mine at first, but I went back on her, and married Marie after all." This Marie Latimer is supposed to have been thirty when she married Dr Phinuit, and to have died at fifty. He asks Dr Hodgson, "Do you know where the Hospital of God is (Hospital de Dieu)?" "Yes, it is at Paris." "Do you remember old Dyruputia (Dupuytren)?" "He was the head of the hospital, and there is a street named for him." Phinuit asserts that he went to London, and from London to Belgium, and travelled a great deal, when his health broke down.

In the above-quoted passage, Phinuit asserts that he had set himself to prove the existence of spirits. If he had set himself the contrary task he would have been more likely to succeed, when he gives us such information as the above. If we went no further, we should need to ask ourselves how serious men can have concerned themselves during so long a period with such idle stories. Happily, as we shall see later, others have succeeded in establishing their identity better than Phinuit has done. Phinuit himself, even if he tells the most foolish stories when he speaks of himself, reveals profoundly intimate and hidden

secrets when he speaks of others. Truly, it is correctly said that these phenomena are disconcerting. But they are none the less interesting to science when their authenticity and the sincerity of the medium are beyond discussion, as in the present case. I will therefore go on examining the Phinuit personality; it will be the reverse side of the medal.

An American doctor, whom Dr Hodgson designates by the initials C. F. W., has a sitting with Mrs Piper on May 17, 1889. Here is a fragment of the dialogue between him and Phinuit.[1]

C. F. W.—"What medical men were prominent in Paris in your time?"

PHINUIT.—"Bouvier and Dupuytren, who was at Hôtel Dieu."

C. F. W.—"Was Dupuytren alive when you passed out?"

PHINUIT.—"No; he passed out before me; I passed out twenty or thirty years ago."

C. F. W.—"What influence has my mind on what you tell me?"

PHINUIT.—"I get nothing from your mind; I can't read your mind any more than I can see through a stone wall." (Phinuit added that he saw the people of whom he spoke objectively, and that it was they who gave him his information.)

C. F. W.—"Have you any relatives living in Marseilles?"

PHINUIT.—"I had a brother who died there two or three years ago."

A little later on, at the same sitting, Phinuit says,

[1] *Proc. of the S.P.R.*, vol. viii. p. 98.

"Many people think I am the medium; that is all bosh."

Well, so much the better. But if Phinuit is not Mrs Piper, neither does he appear to be a Frenchman. A further proof of this is that he is incapable of keeping up a conversation in French. He speaks English with a pronounced *café-concert* French accent, it is true, but that is not a proof. He likes to count in French, and sometimes he pronounces two or three consecutive words more or less correctly. But who would venture to maintain that Mrs Piper's sub-consciousness has not received them in some way; it would be all the more likely, because at one time our medium had a governess for her children who spoke French fluently. However, Dr C. F. W., quoted above, says that Phinuit understood all that he said to him in French, which Mrs Piper in her normal state could not have done. On the other hand, Professor William James says that Phinuit does not understand his French. Whom shall we believe? One thing is certain, French or not, Phinuit does not speak French. Dr Hodgson asked him why this was. Phinuit, who is never at a loss, explained as follows:—"He had been a long time in practice at Metz, and as there are a great many English there he had ended by forgetting his French." This is just such a piece of childishness as the secondary personalities invent.[1] Dr Hodgson pointed out the absurdity of the explanation to Phinuit, and added, "As you are obliged to express your thoughts through the organism of the medium, and as she does not know French, it would be more plausible

[1] *Proc. of S.P.R.*, part xxi. vol. viii. p. 51.

if you said that it would be impossible to express your thoughts in French by means of Mrs Piper."

Phinuit found the explanation magnificent, and some days after served it up whole to another inquisitive person who questioned him.

As Dr Hodgson continued to tease him about his name, he ended by admitting, or believing, that his name was not Phinuit at all.

"It was the medium Cocke who insisted that my name was Phinuit one day at a sitting. I said, 'All right, call me Phinuit if you like, one name is as good to me as another.' But you see, Hodgson, my name is Scliville, I am Dr John Scliville. But, when I think about it, I had another name between John and Scliville."

Phinuit did think about it, and at another sitting he said he had remembered. His name now was Jean Alaen Scliville. Alaen, as we see, is unmistakably French. In short, these are wretched inventions, quite as wretched and much less poetic than the Martian romance, due to the subconsciousness of Mlle. Smith.

Does Phinuit better justify the title of doctor which he assumes? On this point opinions are less divided. His diagnosis is often surprisingly exact, even in cases where the patient does not himself know what his illness is. As long ago as 1890, Professor Oliver Lodge expresses himself as follows with regard to Phinuit's medical knowledge. The opinion of a man of science like Professor Lodge is of great weight, though he is a physicist and not a doctor.

"Admitting, however, that 'Dr Phinuit' is probably a mere name for Mrs Piper's secondary con-

sciousness, one cannot help being struck by the singular correctness of his medical diagnosis. In fact, the medical statements, coinciding as they do with truth just as well as those of a regular physician, but given without any ordinary examination, and sometimes without even seeing the patient, must be held as part of the evidence establishing a strong *primâ facie* case for the existence of *some* abnormal means of acquiring information."[1]

Dr C. W. F., of whom we have spoken above, asks Phinuit to describe his physical state for him, and Phinuit describes it perfectly. But here, evidently, seeing that C. W. F. was a doctor, and must have known about himself, we may only be concerned with thought-transference. Being curious, Dr C. W. F. asked Phinuit how many years he had to live. Phinuit replied by counting on his fingers in French up to eleven. This happened in 1889. If the prophecy was fulfilled, Dr C. W. F. must have gone to rejoin his colleague in the other world. It would be interesting to know whether this is the case.

In general, the other doctors who have had sittings with Mrs Piper find more fault with Dr Phinuit's prescriptions than with his diagnosis. They blame the prescriptions as being more those of a herbalist than a doctor. This would not be a great reproach. If a Dr Phinuit has really existed, he must have practised fifty or sixty years ago, and must have studied at the beginning of the last century. Therapeutics of that epoch differed considerably from those of the present day. For this reason Dr C. W. F. asks whether Dr Phinuit's medical knowledge really

[1] *Proc. of S.P.R.*, vol. vi. p. 449.

exceeds what Mrs Piper might have read in a manual of domestic medicine. As far as the diagnosis is concerned, his knowledge assuredly exceeds this.

Dr C. W. F. reports a fact which, though it would not prove Dr Phinuit's medical ignorance, would once more prove his ignorance of French, and even of the Latin of botanists. Dr F. asked,[1] "Have you ever prescribed *chiendent* or *Triticum repens?*" using both the French and Latin names. Phinuit seemed much surprised, and said, "What is the English of that?" It is certain that a French doctor, and, above all, a doctor in the beginning of the last century, must know *chiendent*, and even *Triticum repens*.

Mrs Piper told Dr Hodgson that Phinuit had often been shown medicinal plants, and had been asked their names, and that he had never made a mistake. Dr Hodgson procured specimens of three medicinal plants from one of his friends. He himself remained entirely ignorant of their names and uses. Phinuit carefully examined the plants, and was unable to indicate their names or their uses. But neither would this incident prove much. The living practitioners who could not be caught in this way must be rare.

I will give two or three of Phinuit's diagnoses as examples. I will choose those which have been given to Dr Hodgson about himself, as my readers now know him well.

At one of the first sittings[2] Dr Hodgson had with Mrs Piper, Phinuit pronounced the following judgment on his physical constitution, "You are an old bach (bachelor), and will live to be a hundred."

[1] *Proc. of S.P.R.*, vol. viii. p. 51. [2] *Ibid.*

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And he added that Dr Hodgson had at the time a slight inflammation of the nasal membranes, though there was no external sign to guide him.

On another occasion Dr Hodgson asked him a question about a pain he had had but which he no longer felt. Phinuit was evasive at first, saying, "I have told you already that you are perfectly well." He then passed his hand over Dr Hodgson's left shoulder, placed his finger under the left shoulder-blade scapula, on the exact spot where the pain had been, and said it must have been caused by a draught, which was probably true. Another time, Dr Hodgson complained of a pain, without explaining where. Phinuit instantaneously put his finger on the painful spot, below the chest. He said at first that the pain was caused by indigestion, but then corrected himself spontaneously and said it was caused by a muscle strained in some unusual exercise. Dr Hodgson had not thought of this explanation; but it was true that, two days before, when going to bed, and after some weeks' interruption, he had exercised himself with bending his body backwards and forwards. The pain appeared next day. Phinuit ordered applications of cold water on the painful spot, and friction with the hand. Naturally there exist other diagnoses more complicated and extraordinary than those I have quoted.

In terminating this study of Phinuit, I must return to the eternal question—Is Phinuit a different personality from Mrs Piper, or is he only a secondary personality? None of those who have studied the question closely have ventured to decide it categorically. There is no so clearly defined distinction

between the normal personality and the secondary personalities which have so far been studied as there is between Mrs Piper and Phinuit. In fact, the medium and her control have not the same character, nor the same turn of mind, nor the same information, nor the same manner of speech. It is not so with normal and secondary personalities. Our personality may split into fragments, which, at a cursory glance, may appear to be so many different personalities. But when these fragments are closely studied numerous points of contact are found. When suggestion is added to this segregation, the separation between the normal and secondary personalities is even more emphatic. But then there are traces of automatism present which are not to be found in Phinuit. He seems to be as much master of his mental faculties and of his will as you or I.

Finally, if we consider that many of Mrs Piper's controls carry the love of truth further than Phinuit, that they have succeeded in proving their identity in the eyes of their intimates, who were none the less sceptics to begin with; if we consider the George Pelham and Hyslop cases, among others, which we shall fully discuss a little further on, we shall be almost tempted to let Phinuit benefit by the doubt about his colleagues, and to believe that he is really a consciousness different from that of Mrs Piper.

CHAPTER VII

Miss Hannah Wild's letter—The first text given by Phinuit—Mrs Blodgett's sitting—Thought-reading explains the case.

THERE is a case of which I shall speak with some detail in this chapter, for three reasons:—(1) The good faith of the experimenters being unquestioned, if the experiment had succeeded we should certainly have had a first step towards proof of a future life. Experiments of this kind must be arranged if the desired end is to be attained. Even if only one out of ten were successful, we should have established a method of procedure, and should certainly in time discover the truth. (2) This example will once again show the reader the character of Phinuit, who hesitates at no invention, and risks being caught in the act of imposture sooner than own to his ignorance or incapacity. (3) The reader will find in it examples of the untrue assertions which are found in all the bad sittings.

This dishonesty of Phinuit certainly complicates the problem singularly. But I wish to present it as it actually is, with its dark and bright sides. Science must endeavour to explain both.[1]

Miss Hannah Wild died on July 28, 1886. She

[1] *Proc. of S.P.R.*, vol. viii. p. 69.

was a strong Baptist, and remained so to her last moments. About a year before her death a Boston spiritualist paper published a message supposed to have come from her dead mother. Miss Hannah Wild was much struck by it.

Her sister advised her to try the following experiment. Miss Hannah Wild should write a letter whose contents she alone knew, and when she died, she should return, if not prevented by circumstances stronger than her will, and communicate the contents of the letter to her sister through some medium. The letter would only be opened when some message bearing all the marks of authenticity should arrive.

This was done. Hannah Wild wrote the letter, sealed it and enclosed it in a tin box. It was understood that no mortal hand was to touch it. When giving it to her sister she said, "If I can come back it will be like ringing the City Hall bell!"

Mrs Blodgett, Hannah Wild's sister, adds, "Hands have never touched that letter; it was in my husband's safe. When I sent it to Professor James I took it out with scissors."

Mrs Blodgett having, in the last half of 1886, seen Professor James's name in a journal concerned with Psychical Research wrote to him and told him the above circumstances. In consequence he tried to get the letter read through Mrs Piper. He sent her, not the letter, of course, but a glove which Miss Hannah Wild had worn on the day she wrote the letter, and the lining of her hat.

Mr J. W. Piper, Mrs Piper's father-in-law, acted as sitter. Phinuit took his time, and tried for the contents of the letter during several sittings. The

result was a long dramatic elucubration, which reminds us involuntarily of certain of Mlle. Smith's subliminal productions. I will give three paragraphs of it. The remarks between parentheses are Mrs Blodgett's; the reader will appreciate the facts by the light the remarks throw upon them. However, it may not be useless to remark that Phinuit found Miss Hannah Wild's exact name, which had been carefully hidden from him.

1. "DEAR SISTER,—In the bottom of my trunk in the attic with my clothes I have placed a little money and some jewels, given to me, as you know, by mother, and given to her by grandfather, who has now passed away. Bessie, I now give to you; they are all I have, I wish I could have more. It has grieved me not a little not to have given the Society something, but as you know, sister, I am unable to do so. If it be possible I will give them my presence in spirit." (Sister left no trunk. Never lived in any house with an attic. Mother never gave her any jewels. Mother's father died in 1835. Mother died in 1880, and gave all her jewels to me. These jewels had previously been given to mother by myself. Sister left money, and could have given the Society some had she chosen to do so.)

2. "The table-cover which I worked one year ago I want you to give sister Ellen, John's wife. The reason I did not dispose of them before will be a satisfactory proof of spirit return. My dearest sister, should you ever marry, as I think you will, take the money and use it as you think best, to buy a wedding outfit." (She never worked a table-cover. I worked one and gave her. Brother John died when five years

old. There is no one by the name of Ellen connected with the family. She did think I would marry, but knew that I had plenty of money to buy an outfit.)

3. "Do not dress in mourning for me, for if it be true the spirit can return I want to see you dressed in light, not black. Not for me now, my dear sister Bessie. Try to be cheerful and happy through your married life, and when you hear from me—this for you a copy, 'remember sister Hannah is not dead, only passed out of the body.' I will give you a beautiful description of our life there and of my darling mother if I see her." (Hannah always wore black, and often said it would be wicked for me to take it off, for my child always said, "Mamma, you will always wear black for me," and I have worn black for twenty years, ever since my child died.)

And so forth.

Phinuit's elucubrations were six good manuscript pages long. Except Hannah Wild's name everything was wrong. And yet Mr J. W. Piper affirms that during all the sittings he had the feeling that he was talking to the spirit of Miss Hannah Wild. Phinuit was asked for a description of the communicator; all the details were false. After this it is unnecessary to say that the letter Miss Hannah Wild had written before her death, when opened by Professor James, after receiving the Phinuit letter, differed totally from that document.

So far the Blodgett-Wild case is on the whole commonplace. Phinuit lied when he pretended to communicate with Hannah Wild's spirit; for there is no more reason here than elsewhere to sup-

pose conscious fraud on Mrs Piper's part. But this is the point at which the case becomes interesting, and where it may perhaps throw some light on Phinuit's manner of procuring information, and on the character of Phinuit himself. If we judged only from this case, it would seem that Phinuit was merely a secondary personality of Mrs Piper, possessing the extraordinary power of reading people's minds unhindered by distance. But let us say at once that a number of other cases render the problem much more complex. The conclusion to be drawn from what follows is, that if Phinuit is really what he asserts that he is, he does not draw his information only from disincarnated spirits, whom he is supposed to perceive objectively; he also reads the minds of the living, and with the information he finds there he creates personages, apparently life-like, and bearing a strong resemblance to deceased persons.

On the 30th of May 1888[1] Mrs Blodgett in person had a sitting with Mrs Piper. The time was fixed by Dr Hodgson, who took care, as usual, not to name the future sitter, and not to give any hint of her identity. In my eyes this sitting is remarkable. Mrs Blodgett, with great good sense, sums it up thus: "All the details which were in my mind Phinuit gave exactly. On all the points of which I was ignorant he gave false replies, or said nothing."

During the whole sitting Phinuit asserted that he was literally repeating the words of Miss Hannah Wild, present. I shall quote the most typical incidents. The remarks between parentheses are taken from Mrs Blodgett's comments.

[1] *Proc. of S.P.R.*, vol. viii. p. 75.

HANNAH WILD.[1]—"Bessie, Betsie Blodgett, my sister. How glad I am to see you! I am Anna, Hannah, your sister, Hannah Wild. How's father and all the folks? Oh, I am so glad to see you!" (All this time Mrs Piper kept on slapping me with her hand just like sister. When she died my name was not Blodgett but Bessie Barr.)

H. W.—"Saw you once before in that audience. Threw a message at you." (Four weeks after sister's death, John Slater, a medium, said, pointing to me amongst a large audience, "There is a lady here who wants to have you know she is here. She says she will tell you what is in that paper soon.")

H. W.—"How's the Society, Lucy Stone and all of them?" (Lucy Stone is the editor of the *Woman's Journal*, and wrote a piece about sister when she died.)

H. W.—"My photo in that bag."

Mrs Blodgett had brought a bag containing several things which had belonged to her sister. Mrs Piper tried to open it, but could not. It seems that Miss Hannah Wild, living, could only open the bag with difficulty. Mrs Blodgett opened it. The so-called Hannah Wild threw the objects out pell-mell, saying, "Picture of mine in here." This was so. Now this photograph was the only thing in the bag which Mrs Blodgett did not know was there; she had slipped her sister's will into an envelope in which the photograph already was, but she had not consciously noticed it was there. Her subconsciousness had prob-

[1] Phinuit is speaking, but as he is supposed to be repeating Miss Hannah Wild's words literally, it is easier to speak as if she were speaking directly.

ably been more perspicacious, and it is from that Phinuit had probably drawn the detail; at least unless he has the power of seeing certain things through opaque bodies.

H. W.—(Takes her will, which she had shaken out of the envelope containing the photograph.) This is to you. I wrote it and gave it to you. That was my feelings at the time I wrote it. You did not think as I did. Yon made me feel sad sometimes. But you did take good care of me. I always felt there was something that would never part us. Do just as I told you to. You remember about my dress? Where's my comb? You remember all about my money? I told you what to do with that. That ain't written in this paper. I told you that on my death-bed." (All this is correct, except that I know nothing about a comb. The will disposed of her books and dresses and all her things, except her money.)

H. W.—"How is Alice?"

Mrs B.—"What Alice?"

H. W.—"The little girl that's a namesake." (Our living sister Alice had a child named Alice Olivia, and Hannah always called her Alice: it was our mother's name. The others called her Ollie. Hannah did not like this, and did all she could to make us know that she did not want the Alice dropped.)

H. W.—"Mother is here. Where's doctor? Where's brother?" (My husband is a doctor; Hannah knew him. We have one brother living named Joseph, who travels most of the time.) Hannah Wild takes a gold chain wrapped in silk. Mrs Blodgett says, "Hannah, tell me whose and what is that?"

H. W.—(Feeling tassel at end of chain) "My mother's chain." (The chain was a long chain of mother's. It was cut in two after she died. Hannah had worn one half. The half which I took to the sitting had not been worn since mother's death, and it had a tassel on the end, different from the half Hannah had worn.)

H. W.—"Who's Sarah?"

Mrs B.—"Sarah Grover?"

H. W.—"No, Sarah Obb—Hodg—" (The medium's hand points to Mr Hodgson, and the voice says it belongs to him.) Then Hannah Wild adds, "Sarah Hodson." (Sarah Hodson was a friend of sister's at Waterbury, Connecticut. I had thought of her the night before when I met Mr Hodgson, as she also came from London, England.)

H. W.—"Where is my big silk handkerchief?"

Mrs B.—"I gave it to Clara. You told me to."

H. W.—"Where is my thimble?"

Mrs B.—"I don't know."

H. W.—"I saw you put it into this bag." (The handkerchief was a large silk one given to sister by a lady who lived with us for years, and it came from England. I did not know I had put Hannah's thimble in the bag, but found on return to the hotel that it was there on the bed, with the rest of the things I had taken out of the bag before starting for the sitting.)

Mrs B.—"Can you tell me, sister, how many brothers you have in spirit life?"

H. W.—"One, two, three." (I asked her how many brothers, because William had only been dead since

March 27 in the same year (1888). "Three" was correct.)

Mrs B.—"Can you tell me where that letter is now that you wrote?"

H. W.—"It is at home, in tin box."

Mrs B.—"Can't you tell me more about it?"

H. W.—"I have told you. It would be like ringing church bells if I could come back." (The letter was in the bag wrapped up in rubber cloth. Sister did say when we put the letter in tin box, "It would be like ringing the City Hall bell if I can come back.")

H. W.—"Where's William and doctor?"

Mrs B.—"Hannah, you tell me where William is."

H. W.—"He is here. I found him."

Mrs B.—"How long has he been?"

H. W.—"Weeks. You know all about it. He sticks to you all the time every day. William wants to know how you like that lot."

Mrs B.—"What lot?"

H. W.—You ought to know. You bought it to bury him in. William is better out of the world than in it. He was a strange fellow. He don't like that lot. Do you?"

Mrs B.—"No." (I had bought him a lot in Woodlawn Cemetery, N.Y. His wife wanted him buried there. We wanted to take him to our home and bury him by mother. Brother was very proud, and we thought the lot was not as nice as he would like.)

At the end of the sitting the so-called Hannah Wild said that she must go because it was church time, and she would not miss it. Mrs Blodgett remarks that this is also characteristic of her sister. It was Decoration Day, and the living Hannah Wild

would certainly not have missed it. This last incident is odd ; but there are many analogous ones in the literature of the subject and in Mrs Piper's sittings. Often the communicator will not allow that he is dead, or has passed into another world ; if he is asked what he is doing, he appears surprised, and affirms that he is carrying on his usual occupation ; if he is a doctor, he asserts that he continues to visit his patients. Phinuit is often asked to describe the people of whom he speaks. He pictures them as they were on earth, in their customary dress, and he affirms that he so sees them. At the end of one sitting Professor Hyslop's father exclaims, "Give me my hat!" Now this was an order he often gave in his lifetime when he rose painfully from his invalid chair to accompany a visitor to the gate. I repeat, these incidents are odd and embarrassing for the spiritistic hypothesis. It is difficult to admit that the other world, if it exists, should be a servile copy of this. Should we suppose that the bewilderment caused by death is so great in certain individuals that it is some time before they perceive the change in their environment? It is difficult to admit this. Should we suppose these speeches are automatisms of the communicator, rendered half unconscious towards the end of the sitting by the heavy atmosphere of the medium's organism? But, when the communication is not direct, when an intermediary is speaking through the organism, what should we think? Are these traits thrown in intentionally by the communicator, the better to prove his identity? No doubt these incidents are very embarrassing to the spiritistic hypothesis. On the other hand, if

we allow that the self-styled communicators are created by the entranced Mrs Piper from the elements she finds here and there in the minds of living persons, these incidents are quite natural; it would be surprising not to meet with them. I mention the difficulty in passing; it will not fall to my lot to solve it.

However this may be, Mrs Blodgett left the sitting convinced that she had been conversing with her own consciousness externalised, and not with the spirit of her sister. But if it had not been for the previous incident of the letter, which had invited distrust, and if Mrs Blodgett had had less judgment, she would probably have left the sitting convinced that she had been talking to her defunct sister. Many spiritualists must commit like errors every day. This shows what circumspection is needed in such studies as these.

Mrs Blodgett asked Dr Hodgson to have some sittings for her, to try again to obtain the text of the famous letter.[1] At the sitting of August 1, 1888, Dr Hodgson gave Phinuit a lock of Hannah Wild's hair. Phinuit began by saying it was not her hair; he then recognised his mistake, but said that someone else must have touched it. Then he gave a new version of the letter. "This letter is concerned with an incident in Hannah's former life," he affirmed. Then he dictated, "It's something about Hannah's early history, that letter is. At one time I met a person whom I loved. A circumstance in our affection changed my whole life. Had it not been for this one thing I should have been married and happy. Consequently I went into religious work,

[1] *Proc. of S.P.R.*, vol. viii. p. 78.

and did all the good I could. Whoever reads this letter after I am gone will know why I remained Hannah Wild . . ." Mrs Blodgett's comment on this text is very interesting. She says, "This is not what my sister wrote on her deathbed, but it is perfectly true. It was the great grief of sister's life."

How could Phinuit guess this by simply touching a lock of hair? Can it be that our feelings, our sorrows and joys, leave a persistent vibration on the objects we touch, which sensitives can perceive after even a long interval? Numerous and well-observed facts would almost compel us to believe so. It would seem as if the vibrations of the soul imprinted themselves on matter as sound waves are recorded on the cylinder of a phonograph. Certain subjects, in an abnormal state, would be able to recover them. There is, after all, nothing in this repugnant to science.

This abnormal state, which allows sensitives to apprehend past vibrations, is perhaps only a partial abandonment of the body by the spirit. In that case it would be easier to understand that those who, like Phinuit, have entirely quitted their bodies, those who are in another world, can read these vibrations as easily as we can read a book. But if this is so, why does not Phinuit own it? It would be marvel enough to satisfy his vanity. It would not, in any event, prevent his obtaining information directly from disincarnated beings. But he ought to state precisely in each case from what source he derives his knowledge. He does nothing of the kind, and thus renders it almost impossible for us to believe in his individuality.

At this same sitting Phinuit asserted that he would give the letter word for word if he had a longer lock of hair. So Mrs Blodgett sent a longer lock, which was given to him on October 3, 1888. The text he gave was as incorrect as the preceding ones. A last effort was made in 1889, again without result. Miss Hannah Wild has not come back from the other world to tell us what she wrote on her death-bed.

I will end with another example which demonstrates Phinuit's cleverness in reading people's minds even at a distance. On June 3, 1891,[1] Mrs Blodgett wrote a letter to Phinuit. Dr Hodgson read it to him at a sitting on the 15th of the same month. This drew from Phinuit the following statement, which had nothing to do with the contents of the letter: "She's been reading a funny book—a life of somebody. She called on an old friend of Hannah's —somebody I told her to go and see. Mrs Blodgett has a friend named Severance." Mrs Blodgett writes on June 17, "Really Phinuit is doing wonderfully well as far as thought-transference goes. Saturday night, June 13, I gave a talk to the Young Women's Rooms about Helen Gardener's new book, *Is this your Son, my Lord?*" (On the) "14th I did not go to see the friend in body, but I know my mind went, and I wrote him the letter to ask him what Phinuit told me to do when there." Mrs Blodgett adds:—"I had a friend named Severance, but sister Hannah had never heard of him."

[1] *Proc. of S.P.R.*, vol. viii. p. 83.

CHAPTER VIII

Communications from persons having suffered in their mental faculties—Unexpected communications from unknown persons—The respect due to the communicators—Predictions—Communications from children.

THE Blodgett-Hannah Wild case is, I repeat, of a kind to throw discredit on the spiritualist hypothesis. If it and analogous cases alone were considered, it would be needful to ask why earnest men, after long hesitation, have finally given the preference to this hypothesis. But psychic phenomena, and mediumistic phenomena in particular, are infinitely various; they present a multitude of aspects, and it would not be wise to consider them separately.

In this Hannah Wild case everything seems to support the telepathic hypothesis. By this must be understood, not only the reading of thoughts in the consciousness, and even in the subconsciousness, of the persons present, but also in that of absent persons, however far off they may be. And what Phinuit calls "the influence" must be added. This mysterious "influence" might be the traces of vibrations left on objects by our thoughts and feelings. Evidently this hypothesis plunges us into mystery, at least as much as does the spiritualist hypothesis. Nevertheless, we should be obliged to give it the preference,

if it were sufficiently supported, because it is, after all, more in touch with our present conceptions than its rival.

Even the incident of the medium who, designating Mrs Blodgett amidst a numerous audience, said to her, "There is a lady here who wants to speak to you; she will soon give you the contents of the paper," can easily be explained by telepathy. Mrs Blodgett was in the presence of a medium. Now some medium was to reveal to her the mysterious text of her sister's letter. That was enough to bring the recollection of the letter into the foreground of her consciousness, where the medium may have read it telepathically.

But again, there are an infinite number of other cases which telepathy does not explain at all, or only insufficiently. I shall try to show this by repeating some of the arguments put forward by Dr Hodgson in his remarkable report in 1898, and in the chapter entitled "Indications that the 'Spirit' Hypothesis is True."[1]

The most important of these arguments is founded upon the communications of persons whose mental faculties had been impaired by illness for a more or less long period before their deaths. A long series of concordant observations inspired Dr Hodgson with this argument. It is as follows:—"If we had to do with telepathy, the communications should be most clear and abundant in the cases where the memories of the dead are most clear and abundant in the minds of the living."

But experience shows that this is not so. When

[1] *Proc. of S.P.R.*, vol. xiii. p. 370.

the self-styled communicator has suffered from mental illness before his death, the communications repeat the trouble feature by feature; they are full of confusion and incoherence. This confusion and incoherence is all the graver, as the mental trouble preceding death was graver. It disappears slowly, but sometimes traces of it appear years after. Telepathy does not explain this. If there is madness in the mind of the dead person, there is none in the minds of the living who remember him. On the other hand, if we introduce the spiritualist hypothesis, the fact is quite admissible, either because the mental trouble may only slowly disappear, or because (and the controls assert this) the mere fact of the disincarnated spirits plunging again into the atmosphere of a human organism temporarily reproduces the trouble.

Besides, there is always more or less incoherence in the communications made very shortly after death, even when the communicator has kept his full mental faculties up to his last moments. But if the communicator were really what he says he is, we should expect this, for three reasons—the violent shock of disincarnation must trouble the mind; the arrival in an entirely new environment, where he must at first be unable to distinguish much, should trouble him still more; and lastly, these first attempts at communication may be impeded by his want of skill in using the strange organism; he would require a sort of apprenticeship.

But when no mental trouble has preceded death, the incoherence of the first communications does not last. They soon become as clear as the imperfection

of the means which the dead man has to use permits In the George Pelham case, which we shall examine later on, the first communications were also incoherent. Yet George Pelham was soon to become one of the most clear and lucid, if not the most clear and lucid, of all the dead persons who have claimed to manifest through Mrs Piper's organism. But George Pelham died suddenly by an accident, and his intellectual faculties, which, moreover, were above the average, had never been injured.

This is, I repeat, what experience seems to show. But doubtless many more observations are needed before we can affirm that it is really proved.

However, unless Dr Hodgson and his colleagues are mistaken, these facts are contrary to what we should expect on the telepathic theory. I will quote some examples.

Dr Hodgson tried to obtain communications from one of his friends, designated by the initial A., more than a year after the latter's death. He spent six sittings over it, but the result was meagre. He obtained some names, and with difficulty some mention of certain incidents of A.'s life. Some of the incidents were even unknown to Dr Hodgson at the time, but all was full of incoherence and confusion. Finally he gave it up on the advice of George Pelham, who said that A.'s spirit would not be clear for some time yet. This A. had suffered from violent headaches and nervous exhaustion for some years before his death, though the troubles had not amounted to insanity. Now, just at the time when A. was incapable of manifesting clearly, other spirits were manifesting with all desirable lucidity

in identical circumstances. Another case quoted by Dr Hodgson is that of a Mr B. who had committed suicide in a fit of insanity. He was not personally known to Dr Hodgson. During several years Mr B.'s communications were extremely confused, even about matters with which Dr Hodgson was well acquainted.

A third communicator, an intimate friend of Dr Hodgson's, had also committed suicide. About a year after his death he still seemed to be ignorant of events which he had known well in his life-time and which were quite clear in the inquirer's mind. More than seven years after his death he wrote through the medium's hand, "My head was not clear, and is not yet, when I speak to you."

On December 7,[1] 1893, M. Paul Bourget, of the *Académie Française*, and his wife, had a sitting with Mrs Piper. M. Paul Bourget much wished to communicate with an artist who had committed suicide at Venice by throwing herself out of a gondola. There exists no written report of this sitting, and consequently we do not know exactly what it was worth. But on December 11[2] M. Bourget had another sitting, and this time Dr Hodgson accompanied him and took notes. The artist seemed to make desperate efforts to communicate and to write herself, but she could only produce two or three French words, amongst which apparently was the exclamation, "Mon Dieu!" Nevertheless her Christian name was given and the place where she had killed herself, Venice, and the syllable

[1] *Proc. of S.P.R.*, vol. xiii. p. 494. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 495.

Bou, the beginning of Bourget, was often repeated. Why were the results so poor? M. and Mme. Bourget knew this person well, and their minds were full of reminiscences on which the medium had only to draw.

However, some people might reason as follows. Objects having been used by the persons with whom it is desired to communicate are nearly always given to Mrs Piper. If the medium obtains her information not only from the minds of the living, but likewise from the "influence," that is, from the vibrations which our thoughts and feelings may have left recorded on these objects, the imperfections of the earlier communications of persons whose minds have been disturbed might be explained by the theory that the "influence" left by an insane person would be neither so clear nor so easy to read as that left by a sane one. But then why should the communicators grow clear with time? Why should they become lucid at the time when they ought to be still more confused, if the telepathic hypothesis is the correct one?

But this interpretation falls to the ground entirely when we take into account the numerous communicators who are unknown, or almost unknown, to the sitters, of whom absolutely nobody is thinking, and who come in the middle of a sitting to send a message to their surviving relatives. Mrs Piper cannot have produced these communications by means of the "influence" left on objects, unless we suppose that the presence of these objects is not necessary and that any "influence" may strike the medium from any point of the compass at the

moment when she least expects it. That would perhaps be stretching the hypothesis beyond allowable limits. And these cases are, I repeat, numerous and very interesting. I quote three for my readers' edification.

During the 46th [1] of the English sittings with Messrs Oliver and Alfred Lodge as sitters, Phinuit suddenly exclaimed,—

"Oh, dear, there is something very bad about this. Here's a little child called Stevenson—two of them—one named Mannie (Minnie?) wants to send her love to her father in the body and the mother in the body —she had sore throat and passed out. He is very bad and has gone away very unhappy. She's clinging to me and begging me to tell you that she's little Mannie Stevenson, and that her father's almost dead with grief, he sits crying, crying dreadful, and he's gone away very unhappy. Tell him she's not dead, but sends her love to him; and tell him not to cry."

Professor LODGE.—"Can she send her name any better?"

PHINUIT.—"Oh, they called her Pet, and when she was ill they called her Birdie. And tell mamma too, do."

Professor L.—"Well, I will if I can."

Professor Lodge could not discover the Stevenson family, which was a pity, for two reasons; first, that a message from beyond the tomb might have restored the despairing parents to a little hope and calm; and secondly, because cavillers could not have attributed the incident to the medium's cunning,

[1] *Proc. of S.P.R.*, vol. vi. p. 514.

which they would not fail to do if other incidents of the same nature did not make this interpretation almost inadmissible.

At the 45th English sitting,[1] when Messrs Oliver and Alfred Lodge and Mr and Mrs Thompson were the sitters, Phinuit suddenly said,—

"Do you know Richard Rich, Mr Rich?"

Mrs THOMPSON.—"Not well; I knew a Dr Rich."

PHINUIT.—"That's him; he's passed out. He sends kindest regards to his father." And Phinuit began directly to speak of something else.

At the 83rd sitting, when Mr and Mrs Thompson were again present, Phinuit said all at once,—

"Here's Dr Rich;" upon which Dr Rich proceeds to speak.

Dr RICH.—"It is very kind of this gentleman" (*i.e.*, Dr Phinuit) "to let me speak to you. Mr Thompson, I want you to give a message to father."

Mr THOMPSON.—"I will give it."

Dr R.—"Thank you a thousand times; it is very good of you. You see I passed out rather suddenly. Father was very much troubled about it, and he is troubled yet. He hasn't got over it. Tell him that I am alive—that I send my love to him. Where are my glasses" (the medium passes her hands over her eyes)? "I used to wear glasses" (true). "I think he has them, and some of my books. There was a little black case I had; I think he has that too. I don't want that lost. Sometimes he is bothered about a dizzy feeling in his head—nervous about it—but it is of no consequence."

Mr T.—"What does your father do?"

[1] *Proc. of S.P.R.*, vol. vi. p. 509.

(The medium took up a card and appeared to write on it, and pretended to put stamp in corner.)

Dr R.—"He attends to this sort of thing. Mr Thompson, if you will give this message I will help you in many ways. I can and I will."

Professor Lodge remarks about this incident, "Mr Rich, senior, is head of Liverpool Post Office. His son, Dr Rich, was almost a stranger to Mr Thompson, and quite a stranger to me. The father was much distressed by his son's death, we find. Mr Thompson has since been to see him and given him the message. He (Mr Rich, senior) considers the episode very extraordinary and inexplicable, except by fraud of some kind. The phrase, 'Thank you a thousand times,' he asserts to be characteristic, and he admits a recent slight dizziness. Mr Rich did not know what his son means by *a black case*. The only person who could give any information about it was at the time in Germany. But it was reported that Dr Rich talked constantly about a black case when he was on his deathbed."

No doubt Mr and Mrs Thompson knew Dr Rich, having met him once. But they were quite ignorant of all the details here given. Whence did the medium take them? Not from the "influence" left on some object, because there was no such object at the sitting.

At a sitting on the 28th November 1892,[1] at the house of Mr Howard, when those present were Mr and Mrs Howard, their daughter Katherine, and Dr Hodgson, Phinuit suddenly asked,—

"Who is Farnan?"

[1] *Proc. of S.P.R.*, vol. xiii. p. 416.

Mr HOWARD.—"Vernon?"

PHINUIT,—"I don't know how you pronounce it. It is F-a-r-n-s-w-o-r-t-h." (Phinuit spelt it.)

Dr HODGSON.—"What about it?"

PHINUIT.—"He wants to see you."

Dr H.—"He wants to see me?"

PHINUIT.—"Not you, but this lady."

Mrs H.—"Well, what does he want to say to me? Is it a woman or a man?"

PHINUIT.—"It is a gentleman; and do you remember your Aunt Ellen?"

Mrs H.—"Yes; which Aunt Ellen?"

PHINUIT.—"She has got this gentleman." (*I.e.*, this man was in her service.)

Further on, Phinuit adds, "That gentleman wanted to send his love to her, and to be remembered to you —so that you may know he is here, and it is a test. These little things sometimes interrupt me greatly and when I go to explain it to you, you can't understand it. But sometimes when I am talking to you, I am suddenly interrupted by somebody who don't realise what they are doing, and then I give you what they say as near as I can, you understand that, and it is very difficult sometimes for me to discern it and place it in the right place."

Mrs Howard asked her Aunt Ellen if she had known anyone named Farnsworth, without telling her more. Phinuit was right: a gardener named Farnworth had worked for her uncle and then for her grandfather thirty-five or forty years before. Mrs Howard had never heard of him.

Incidents like those I have just related are evidently difficult to explain on the telepathic theory.

But a more complete refutation of the telepathic hypothesis would be to get a certain number of fulfilled predictions. The medium could not read events which have not yet occurred, either in the minds of the living or in the "influence" left on objects. Phinuit has often tried his hand at predictions; I will quote one.

At M. Bourget's second sitting,[1] in 1893, a Mrs Pitman appeared, who had lived a long time in France and spoke French well, and who offered to help the artist with whom M. Bourget wished to talk in her efforts to communicate.

In 1888, Mrs Pitman, who was a member of the American Society for Psychical Research, had had two sittings with Mrs Piper. Among other things, Phinuit said to her, "You are going to be very sick; you will go to Paris; you will be very sick: you will have great weakness in the stomach and head. A sandy complexioned gentleman will attend you while you are ill beyond the sea." In consequence of this, Mrs Pitman asked Phinuit what the end of the illness would be. Phinuit made evasive replies. Mrs Pitman asked Dr Hodgson's intervention; he insisted in his turn, and Phinuit got out of it by saying, "After she gets over the sickness she will be all right."

Mrs Pitman replied that there was nothing the matter with her stomach; she contradicted Phinuit on every point, and he appeared much annoyed. But Mrs Pitman soon fell ill. She was attended by a Dr Herbert, who was very fair; he diagnosed inflammation of the stomach. Then Mrs Pitman began to believe in Phinuit's prediction; but interpreting

[1] *Proc. of S.P.R.*, vol. xiii. p. 496.

his last words wrongly, she believed she should recover. Dr Charcott attended her at Paris for a nervous illness. She suffered from weakness in the head, and her mental faculties were impaired. In short, she died.

Again, other communications which do not fit in with the telepathic theory are those from very young children. When they communicate a short time after death, they reproduce their childish gestures, they repeat the few words they had begun to stammer; they ask by gestures for the toys they liked. All these details are evidently to be found in the minds of the parents. But when these children communicate long years after their death, it is as if they had grown in the other world; they only rarely allude to the impressions of their babyhood, even when these impressions remain vivid in the minds of the father and mother. George Pelham was one day acting as intermediary for a child who had been dead many years. The mother naturally spoke of him as a child, and George Pelham remonstrated, "Roland is a gentleman; he is not a little boy."[1]

[1] *Proc. of S.P.R.*, vol. xiii. p. 512.

CHAPTER IX

Further consideration of the difficulties of the problem—George Pelham—Development of the automatic writing.

PHINUIT'S empire remained uncontested till the month of March 1892. He sometimes yielded his place to other controls, but rarely through a whole sitting. However, in March 1892, a new communicator appeared, who imposed his collaboration on Phinuit, with the latter's consent or without it. This newcomer called himself George Pelham,[1] and asserted that he was the disincarnated spirit of a young man of thirty-two, who had been killed four or five weeks before by a horse accident. However that may be, this new control had more culture, more moral elevation, and a greater love of truth than the so-called French doctor. The latter benefited by the companionship; he tried to be more truthful, and seemed to make fewer appeals to his imagination; in short, all the sittings improved, even those in which Phinuit appeared alone.

The newcomer did everything in his power to establish his identity. His success is still a matter open to discussion, in the view of some persons, and their doubts at least prove that, in order to solve this greatest of all problems, it is not enough that the

[1] Not the real name. *See* p. 78, *Trans.*

communicators should give us numerous details which would seem at a first glance to establish their identity, though the few cases in which identity appears to be proved furnish us with a strong presumption in favour of survival after death. If George Pelham is what he says he is, future generations will owe him profound gratitude; he has done all that he could, under circumstances which are, it appears, very unfavourable, although we are not in a position to understand the difficulties.

It is not always easy to prove identity, even between the living. Imagine a man in England, at the end of a telegraph or telephone wire; imagine that a certain number of his friends at the other end of the wire, in France, refuse to believe him when he says he is So-and-so, and say, "Please prove your identity." The unfortunate man will be in difficulties. He will say, "Do you remember our being together in such a place?" The reply will be, "Nonsense; somebody has told you of that incident, and it does not in the least prove that you are the person you say you are." And so on, and so on. One fact is incontestable, however; there is somebody at the end of the wire. The telepathic theory asserts that, in spite of appearances, there is no one at the end of the wire, or, at least, that no one is there but the medium, temporarily endowed with powers as mysterious as they are extraordinary. But to return to George Pelham.

Pelham is not his exact name. The last syllable has been slightly modified, from motives of discretion. He belonged to a good family in the United States, which counts Benjamin Franklin amongst its an-

cestors. He had studied law, but when his studies were finished he gave himself up exclusively to literature and philosophy. He had published two works, which brought him much praise from competent judges. He had lived for a long time in Boston or its neighbourhood. The last three years of his life were passed in New York. In February 1892 he fell from his horse and was killed on the spot.

He had interested himself in Psychical Research, though very sceptical about the matter. He was a member of the American Society, and later of the American Branch of the Society for Psychical Research. Dr Hodgson knew him very well, and liked to talk to him on account of the soundness of his judgment and the liveliness of his intelligence. But neither time nor circumstances had allowed ties of affection or real friendship to be established between them.

Two years before George Pelham's death, he and Dr Hodgson had a long discussion regarding a future life. George Pelham maintained that it was not only improbable, but also inconceivable. Dr Hodgson maintained that it was at least conceivable. After much exchange of argument, George Pelham ended by allowing so much, and finished the conversation by saying that, if he should die before Dr Hodgson, and should find himself "still existing," he would "make things lively" in the effort to reveal the fact.

George Pelham, more fortunate than many others who, before or after him, have made the same promise, seems to have kept his word. That many others have been unable to do so proves nothing.

The means of communication are still dinfinitely rare ; Mrs Piper is an almost unique medium of her kind up to the present day. It may be that the great majority of the inhabitants of the other world are in the same position as the great majority in this, and are ignorant of the possibility of communication. Even if those who promise to return know of this possibility, the difficulty of recognising their friends must be great, since they do not seem to perceive matter. Their friends who are still in the body should, it appears, call them by thinking intently of them, by presenting to good mediums articles which belonged to the dead, and to which a strong emotional memory is attached, and by asking the controls of these mediums to look for them.

When these precautions are not taken, the survivors are wrong to blame their friends' failure to keep their word, or to conclude that all is ended with the death of the body.

George Pelham may have been enabled to manifest himself by particularly favourable circumstances. He knew of Mrs Piper's existence, although, most probably, Mrs Piper did not know him. In 1888 the American Society for Psychical Research had nominated a commission for the investigation of mediumistic phenomena; this commission asked Mrs Piper for a series of sittings. I do not know whether George Pelham was a member of the commission, but he was present at one of the sittings. The names of all the sitters were carefully kept private, and nothing happened of a nature to draw the attention of the medium to George Pelham, who in all probability passed unnoticed.

Dr Hodgson thinks he can affirm that Mrs Piper only quite recently learned that George Pelham had been present at one of her sittings. The name of George Pelham must have been revealed to her considerably later on, for, in her normal state, she is quite ignorant of what she has said in her trance state; she learns it, as do all those who are interested in these questions, by reading the *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical; Research* except when Dr Hodgson thinks proper to tell her anything.

With the appearance of George Pelham there arose a new method of communication—the method of automatic writing.

It was only on March 12, 1892,[1] that it was granted to Dr Hodgson to be present for the first time when this writing was produced; although it had occurred on rare occasions before. Phinuit was serving as intermediary for a communicator who called herself Annie D. Towards the end of the sitting Mrs Piper's arm rose slowly till the hand was over the top of her head. The arm remained rigid in this position, but the hand trembled very rapidly. Phinuit exclaimed, "She's taken my hand away," and added, "she wants to write." Dr Hodgson put a pencil between Mrs Piper's fingers and a block-book on her head. "Hold the hand," said Phinuit. Dr Hodgson grasped the wrist and stopped the trembling. Then the hand wrote, "I am Annie D. I am not dead but living," and some other words; then Phinuit murmured, "Give me back my

[1] *Proc. of S.P.R.*, vol. xiii. p. 291.

hand." The arm remained contracted and in the same position for a short time, but finally, slowly, and as though with much difficulty, it moved down to the side. During the following sittings the writing was produced in the same inconvenient position. But on April 29, 1892, Dr Hodgson arranged a table so that Mrs Piper's right arm could rest comfortably on it; then, seizing the arm and commanding with all his power, "You must try to write on the table," he succeeded, by using not a little force, in getting the arm down. Since then the writing has been produced with the arm resting more or less on the table. When a control takes possession of the arm to write, it is seized with violent spasmodic convulsions. The block-books, writing-books, pencils, and everything on the table are thrown in confusion on to the floor. Sometimes considerable force must be employed to keep the arm still. Then a pencil is placed between the fingers, and the writing begins. Sometimes, but rarely, the writing is interrupted by a spasm; the hand is firmly closed and the wrist bent, but after a few seconds the spasm disappears, and the writing begins again.

On most occasions, since the automatic writing has become easy, two controls have manifested simultaneously—one by means of the voice, the other by writing; Phinuit continuing to use the voice, according to his former custom. George Pelham, although he also uses the voice occasionally, prefers writing. On the 24th February 1894 a control wrote, "There is no reason why various spiritual minds cannot express their thoughts at the

same time, through the same organism." This is really what happens. The voice may keep up a conversation with a sitter while the hand keeps up another in writing with someone else on a wholly different subject. If the sitter who is talking with the hand allows his attention to be distracted by what the voice says, the hand recalls his attention by its movements. When anyone is speaking to the hand control, it is necessary to speak to the hand, and close to the hand, or there is a risk of not being understood. In short, one must behave as if the hand were a complete and independent being.

Observation of this phenomenon suggested to Dr Hodgson that by using the left hand he could perhaps obtain three communications on three different subjects. He tried and succeeded, although imperfectly; no doubt because, in the normal state, the left hand is not used to writing.

Formerly Phinuit used to protest when the hand was seized, and asked at once that it should be returned to him, as we have seen above. Since the automatic writing has been developed the hand may be used by one control without the fact being perceived by the control who is using the voice. One day Phinuit was talking with a sitter about his relations, when the hand suddenly, and so to say surreptitiously, wrote for Dr Hodgson a communication supposed to come from an intimate friend, and treating of a subject altogether different from those of which the voice was speaking. Dr Hodgson adds that it was "precisely as if a caller should enter a room where two strangers to him were conversing,

but a friend of his also present, and whisper a special message into the ear of the friend without disturbing the conversation."[1]

Phinuit seems to prefer not to notice what the hand is doing. He talks as long as he has an interlocutor, but, when the messages given through the hand distract the attention of this interlocutor, Phinuit often says, "I'll help him." What does he mean by this? It is a mystery. But if it is wished to continue the conversation with him, the ear must be addressed directly he is ready to resume. All this does not interrupt the writing; the head and the hand do not interfere with one another.

The observers of these strange phenomena, especially Dr Hodgson, maintain that the controls write without consciousness that they are writing, as, no doubt, they speak without consciousness that they are speaking. According to what they say, these controls perceive in the body of the medium two principal masses of the mysterious fluid, the unknown energy which appears like light to them, and which they call the "light." One of these masses is in the head, the other in the hand. The controls think "in" this light, and their thoughts are transmitted to us automatically through the organism.

The automatic writing differs according to the controls. They do not always succeed in reproducing the characteristics of their handwriting when alive. George Pelham has tried to do so at least once, and did not succeed. But this should not surprise us; we do not work as well with other people's tools as with our own. In any case this difference in the

[1] *Proc. of S.P.R.*, vol. xiii. p. 294.

handwriting is a presumption the more in favour of the difference of individuality.

The writing often looks like that on a lithographic stone, and can only be read when reflected in a glass; this writing, which is called mirror-writing, is produced as rapidly as ordinary writing, though Mrs Piper, in her normal state, would be unable to write in this way. This mirror-writing has been often observed in subjects who write automatically; the cause for it is still to be found.

On other occasions words are written backwards. Thus for *hospital, latipsoh* will be obtained. With certain mediums not only words but whole sentences are thus written. To read them, they must be begun at the last letter and read backwards to the first. Syllables are also often misplaced in Mrs Piper's automatic writing; thus *hospital* may be written *hostipal.* I remind the reader that I am referring to facts well attested by competent men, about which there can be no question of fraud.

There exist detailed minutes of many of the sittings, copied from stenographic notes. An attempt was made to introduce a phonograph. Phinuit jokingly felt the mouth with his hands and asked, "What is this thing with a tube?" The attempt to explain its use to him was unsuccessful. However, the phonograph recorded the sitting fairly well, but the experiment was not repeated—why, I do not know, for the intonations of the controls would have been an interesting study.

I have often used expressions of affirmation in this chapter, and the reader might therefore conclude

that the existence of spirits is no longer a hypothesis in my eyes, but a reality. I have already warned him, and warn him again, that I speak thus only for convenience' sake, and that the existence of spirits is still as hypothetical to me as to anyone else.

CHAPTER X

How George Pelham has proved his identity—He recognises his friends and alludes to their opinions—He recognises objects which have belonged to him—Asks that certain things should be done for him—Very rarely makes an erroneous statement.

SOME of my readers must have asked themselves what the returning George Pelham can have said to make grave and intelligent men think he has proved his identity. I shall try to give them some idea by relating such incidents as I can report without entering into too slight or complete details. I cannot relate everything, in the first place for want of space, and secondly, because I should be tiresome—a thing to be avoided in a popular work like the present.

When Dr Hodgson wrote the report which appeared in 1898, George Pelham, who, like Phinuit, is always ready to act as intermediary (though employing writing instead of speech) had had occasion to see one hundred and fifty sitters, among whom thirty were old friends of his. He recognised the whole thirty, and never mistook a stranger for a friend. He not only addressed them all by name but took with each of them the tone he had been accustomed to take.

We do not speak in the same way to all our friends. The tone of our conversation differs according to the character and the age of the person we address, and according to the degree of esteem or affection we have for him. These shades of manner are typical, though instinctive, and therefore are difficult to reproduce artificially.

George Pelham, then, addressed the thirty friends whom he had the opportunity of meeting through the medium in the tone which he was in the habit of taking formerly with each one of them. The incidents I shall quote are only examples; I have said why I cannot recapitulate all that has been published about these sittings.[1] Besides, the sitters, for reasons easy to imagine, have declined to permit the publication of all that was most private, and consequently most convincing, in the sittings.

From the beginning George Pelham asks to see his father. He says that he wishes to talk to him about private affairs, and also that he should like to convince him, if possible, of his existence in a new world. Mr Pelham was at once informed, and though he was very sceptical both by nature and education, he, with his second wife, George Pelham's stepmother, visited Mrs Piper at once. They were introduced under false names. Quite at the beginning of the sitting George Pelham wrote, "Hullo, father and mother, I am George!" The communications which followed were altogether what Mr Pelham, senior, would have expected from his living son.

[1] Those readers who are interested in this question are recommended to read Dr Hodgson's Report, *Proc. of S.P.R.*, vol. xiii., *Trans.*

At one of the earliest sittings he asks after one of his friends, a young writer, and urges that he should edit one of his, George Pelham's, unpublished papers.

While George Pelham was living in Boston he was connected by bonds of strong affection with the Howard family. He lived with them often and for long periods. He and James Howard often discussed serious philosophical problems together. At the first sitting George Pelham insistently asked for the Howards.[1] "Tell Jim I want to see him. He will hardly believe me, believe that I am here. I want him to know where I am. O good fellow!" He welcomes Mr and Mrs Howard in a characteristic way: "Jim, is that you? Speak to me, quick. I am not dead. Don't think me dead. I'm awfully glad to see you. Can't you see me? Don't you hear me? Give my love to my father, and tell him I want to see him. I am happy here, and more so since I find I can communicate with you. I pity those people who can't speak."

A Mr Vance has a sitting. George Pelham had known him. At first the communicator does not appear to notice him, being occupied in giving messages to Dr Hodgson. But presently George Pelham recognises him, and says, "How is your son? I want to see him some time." "George, where did you know my son?" "In studies in college." "George, where did you stay with us?" "Country, peculiar house, trees around, porch that projects at the front. Vine at the side. Porch at the front, and swing on the other side." All this was correct.[2]

[1] *Proc. of S.P.R.*, vol. xiii. p. 300. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 458.

Miss Helen Vance and George Pelham had belonged at the same time to a society formed for mutual aid in the art of writing. She came to a sitting some time after it had begun. Mrs Piper, in her normal state, had never met her. Nevertheless, George Pelham asks her at once, "How is the society getting on?" A little later on, the following dialogue takes place between Miss Vance and George Pelham: "Now, whom do you have to correct your writings?" "We correct one another's." "But do they give satisfaction?" "Yes." "What, in their corrections?" "Yes, but not as much as you; your corrections were better than theirs." "Well, that is what I am trying to get out of you." "In other words, George, you wanted a compliment from me." "Oh, bosh, you know me better than that."

Miss Warner had two sittings with Mrs Piper[1] five years after George Pelham's death. He had known her when she was quite a child, but he had not seen her for three years before he died, and in eight years a child becomes a tall young girl. Consequently, at the first sitting, George Pelham did not recognise Miss Warner at all. At the second sitting he admitted this and said, "I do not think I ever knew you very well." "Very little. You used to come and see my mother." "I heard of you, I suppose." "I saw you several times. You used to come with Mr Rogers." "Yes, I remembered about Mr Rogers when I saw you before." "Yes, you spoke of him." "Yes, but I cannot seem to place you. I long to place all my friends, and could do so before I had been gone so long. You see, I am

[1] *Proc. of S.P.R.*, p. 324.

farther away—every day I get further away from you. I do not recall your face; you must have changed." At this moment Dr Hodgson said, "Do you remember Mrs Warner?" "Of course, oh, very well. For pity's sake, are you her little daughter?" "Yes." "By Jove! how you have grown! I thought so much of your mother, a charming woman."

George Pelham not only recognises his friends,[1] as we have just seen; he also remembers their opinions, their occupations, their habits. James Howard is an author. He asks him, "Why don't you write on this subject?" (the future life). Rogers writes also. He asks, "What is Rogers writing now?" "A novel." "I don't mean that. Isn't he writing something about me?" "Yes, he is preparing a memoir of you." "That is kind of him. One is pleased not to be forgotten. He was always very good to me when I was alive."

He remembers the opinions of his father, and the discussions they had upon philosophical questions. "I should like to convince my father," he says; "but it will be hard. My mother will be easier." He says to James Howard, "Do you remember how we used to ask each other for books of certain kinds, about certain books, where they were, and you always knew just where to find them." Formerly, when James Howard and George Pelham were talking together in the evening, the first-named habitually smoked a long pipe. At a sitting held in the library where these conversations used to take place, George

[1] For reports of these sittings see *Proc. of S.P.R.*, vol. viii. pp. 413-441.

Pelham said to Mr Howard, "Get the long pipe and smoke." Katharine is one of James Howard's daughters, who plays the violin. Formerly her practising used to greatly annoy George Pelham, who lived with the Howards. He said to her at a sitting, "Katharine, how is the violin? To hear you playing is horrible, horrible." Mrs Howard replies, "Yes, George, but don't you see she likes her music because it is the best she has." "No, but that is what I used to say."

"Marte" is a pseudonym adopted by Dr Hodgson to designate a well-known American writer. He is a monist, a partisan of Darwinism, convinced that the death of the body is for us the end of all. At a sitting George Pelham said to him, "Evolution is all right in the real life, as Darwin says, but it goes on evoluting in the ideal life, which fact he, of course, knew nothing of until he came here."

George Pelham also recognises objects which have belonged to him, principally those which have some remembered emotional association.

John Hart, at the first sitting at which George Pelham appeared, gave some sleeve-links he was wearing, and asked, "Who gave them to me?" "That's mine. I sent that to you." "When?" "Before I came here. That's mine. Mother gave you that." "No!" "Well, father then, father and mother together. You got those after I passed out. Mother took them, gave them to father, and father gave them to you. I want you to keep them. I will them to you." All this is correct.

At another sitting Mrs Howard gives a photograph. She placed it on the top of the medium's

head. "Do you recognise this?" "Yes, it is your summer house; but I have forgotten the name of the town." "Don't you remember D.?" "Oh, the little brick house and the vine, grape-vine some call it. Yes, I remember it all; it comes back as distinctly as the daylight. Where is the little outhouse?" All this is correct. The outhouse which George Pelham was surprised not to see was a henhouse left just out of the photograph. At another sitting Mrs Howard put a book on the medium's head. We must not forget that the medium's eyes are shut, and the ocular globes upturned. "Do you recognise this book?" "Oh, yes, it is my French Lyrics." Needless to add that this was correct. George Pelham asks for information on the subjects which interested him in life. He asks to have things done for him. At the first sitting he said to the sitter, John Hart, "Go up to my room, where I write. I left things all mixed up. I wish you'd go up and straighten them out for me. Lots of names, lots of letters. You answer them for me."

Evelyn is another of Mr Howard's daughters. George Pelham had given her a book, and had written her name in it. He asks her if she remembers it.

He has not forgotten his former speeches either. He was fond of Evelyn, but this did not prevent his constantly teasing her. Thus she is weak in mathematics. At one sitting George Pelham says to her, "I won't tantalise Evelyn now; I used to torment her a great deal, but she will forgive me, I know." Which does not prevent his adding directly after, "Evelyn is a girl that can always tell how much two

and two is. You have just learned, haven't you? You are not a great one for mathematics, are you?" But he adds quickly, "Now be good, Evelyn. It doesn't matter so much about your lessons; being good is the most important point of all."

James Howard had asked George Pelham several questions to which the latter had not replied, asserting that he had forgotten. On this account James Howard still doubted George Pelham's identity. One day the former said, "George, tell me something that you and I alone know. I ask you, because several things I have asked you you have failed to get hold of. We spent a great many summers and winters together and talked on a great many things and had a great many views in common, went through a great many experiences together. Tell me something now that you remember." The hand at once began to write eagerly: the occurrences related were so private that they cannot be published. At a given moment the hand wrote "Private." Dr Hodgson then left the room. On his return James Howard told him that he had obtained all the proof he could desire, and that he was "perfectly satisfied, perfectly."

At the first sitting at which George Pelham appeared, when John Hart was the sitter, George spoke suddenly of Katharine, James Howard's daughter, and he said something which at the time had no meaning for John Hart. "Tell her, she'll know. I will solve the problems, Katharine." When John Hart reported these words to the Howards they were more struck than by anything else. During George Pelham's last stay with them he had

talked frequently with Katharine upon deep philosophical questions, such as Time, Space, Eternity, and had pointed out to her how unsatisfactory the commonly-accepted solutions were. Then he had added the words of the communication almost textually, "I will solve those problems some day, Katharine." Remark that at this time the Howards had never yet seen Mrs Piper, that John Hart knew absolutely nothing of these conversations, and that Dr Hodgson, who took notes at the sitting, did not at the time know the Howards or of the conversations.

George Pelham had received a good classical education. He was a Humanist. Consequently a rather large number of Latin expressions are found in his language; usual, no doubt, with people of his education, but with which Mrs Piper is not acquainted in her normal state. Phinuit, who cannot have been a good Latinist, does not employ them either. Observation of this fact inspired Professor Newbold[1] with the idea of asking George Pelham to translate a short fragment of Greek, and he proposed the first words which occurred to him; the beginning of the Paternoster: Πάτερ ἡμῶν ὁ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς. George Pelham made some attempts, and finally translated "Our Father is in heaven." Professor Newbold then proposed a longer phrase, which he composed himself on the spot for the occasion: Οὐκ ἔστι θάνατος· αἱ γὰρ τῶν θνητῶν ψυχαὶ ζωὴν ζῶσιν ἀθάνατον, ἀΐδιον, μακάριον. This means, "There is no death; the souls of mortals really live an immortal eternal happy life." George Pelham called to his aid Stainton Moses, who in his

[1] *Proc. of S.P.R.*, vol. xiv. p. 46.

lifetime passed for a good Hellenist. Both together only succeeded in understanding the first proposition, "There is no death." These experiments, at all events, prove that Mrs Piper in the trance state can understand a little Greek, though in her normal state she does not even know the letters. Again, George Pelham and Stainton Moses may have known Greek tolerably well and have forgotten it: it is an accident which has happened to many of us.

With regard to this translation of Greek, we might form another hypothesis. We might suppose that the spirits of George Pelham and Stainton Moses—if there are spirits—perceiving thought directly, and not its material expression, have partly understood what Professor Newbold wanted to say, without knowing in what language it was expressed. If they did not understand wholly and completely, it would be because a thought expressed in a foreign language has in our minds a certain vagueness. We might go further; we might suppose that Mrs Piper's subconsciousness perceives the thought directly, independently of the form in which it is expressed. Mrs Piper has often pronounced words and short sentences in foreign languages. Phinuit likes to say, "Bonjour, comment vous portez vous? Au revoir!" and to count in French. Mme. Elisa, an Italian, the dead sister of Mrs Howard, succeeded in writing or pronouncing some short sentences in more or less odd Italian. I find also at a sitting where the communicator was supposed to be a young Hawaian three or four words of Hawaian very appropriate to the circumstances. Mrs Piper is ignorant of all this in her normal state. I have just said that spirits—

if there are spirits—perceive thought directly. They themselves tell us this. On the other hand, they do not perceive matter, which is non-existent to them. This brings me to a new feature of the sittings, principally of those with George Pelham. If this feature does not increase the proofs of identity, it is at least an evidence of the abnormal powers of the medium.[1] George Pelham is asked to go and see what a certain person is doing at a given time and to come back and relate it. He goes, and partially succeeds. This is what appears to happen: if the act is strongly conceived in the mind of the person he is watching, he perceives it clearly; if it is nearly automatic, he perceives it vaguely; if it is wholly automatic, he does not perceive it at all. He often says that actions have occurred which have only been planned and not executed, at other times he reports past actions as present. This is because spirits have not, it appears, a clear notion of time. I have unfortunately neither time nor space to give examples of this.

Can we say that the communicator George Pelham has never made a partially or wholly erroneous assertion? No. But the number of such assertions is very small, which was not the case when Phinuit reigned alone. Here is one such assertion, at which there has been much cavilling; people have insisted on seeing in it the stamp of Mrs Piper and her social environment, and not at all the stamp of the aristocratic George Pelham. George Pelham is asked, "Could you not tell us something which your mother has done?" He replies,[2] "I saw her brush

[1] *Proc. of S.P.R.*, vol. xiii. p. 329. [2] *Proc. of S.P.R.*, vol. xiii. p. 303.

my clothes and put them away. I was by her side as she did it. I saw her take my sleeve buttons from a small box and give them to my father. I saw her put some papers in a tin box." When Mrs Pelham is questioned by letter, she replies, "George's clothes were brushed and put away, not by me, but by the man who had valeted him." And the hasty conclusion is, Mrs Piper on this occasion thought herself among her own class. She forgot that Mrs Pelham did not brush and put away clothes herself. This is perhaps a too hasty triumph. The most highly-bred women may occasionally brush and put away clothing. Now suppose that what I have said above about the way in which spirits perceive our actions should be true. George Pelham may have seen the project of the action in his step-mother's mind, and not its execution by the valet. It may be objected that he ought to have supposed she would not do it herself. Why? I do not see it. Perhaps he knew that his step-mother was capable, occasionally, of putting away clothes herself.

George Pelham is often asked questions which he cannot answer. But he does not at all pretend to have forgotten nothing. If there is another world, spirits do not go there to ruminate on what has happened in our incomplete life. They go there to be carried away in the vortex of a higher and greater activity. If, therefore, they sometimes forget, it is not astonishing. Nevertheless, they seem to forget less than we do.

CHAPTER XI

George Pelham's philosophy—The nature of the soul—The first moments after death—Life in the next world—George Pelham contradicts Stainton Moses—Space and time in the next world—How spirits see us—Means of communication.

THE communicator, George Pelham, did not confine himself to obtaining recognition from his friends; he talked a great deal of philosophy with them, especially with Dr Hodgson. Indeed, if he had not done so, the omission might have created a doubt as to his identity, for in his lifetime he was fond of such discussions. But for the present Dr Hodgson has kept back these speculations from the other side of the grave, thinking quite rightly that no value would attach to them until unmistakable evidence had been produced for the existence of "another world." Still there are to be found among the reports of the sittings some fragments of these philosophic theories, and they form an interesting subject of study.

The philosophy may be only that of Mrs Piper. But it may on the other hand be the philosophy of the discarnate George Pelham, and for that reason it is not unworthy of examination. Supposing, however, that the assertions made are actually those of an inhabitant of the other world who in this world was

intelligent, honest and cultivated, the question still arises whether we must regard them as expressing Absolute Truth. Surely not; if another world exists beyond this one, its inhabitants have mounted one step—but one step only—above us on the infinite ladder of existence. They do not see the Eternal face to face. It is quite possible that they may be able to see clearly truths of which we have no glimpse, but we are not bound to believe more than we like of what they tell us.

If the existence of the discarnate George Pelham is established, a new light is undoubtedly thrown on the old problem as to the nature of the soul, a problem as old as the world itself. The disciples of Plato's Socrates tried to interpret it by the charming analogy of the lyre and its harmony; asking whether man may not be compared to a lyre and his soul to its harmony, a harmony which ceases to exist when the instrument is broken. Using more modern terms, we may ask whether the soul is the resultant of the forces of the bodily organism, or whether it is the indestructible and mysterious motor which produces the action of that organism.

George Pelham declares that the soul is in truth the motor, and that the body is merely a machine used temporarily by the soul to act upon the obscure world of matter. He speaks to this effect: Thought exists outside matter and is in no way dependent upon matter. The destruction of the body does not have as its consequence the destruction of thought. After the dissolution of the body the Ego continues its existence, but it then perceives thought directly, is much more free, and can express itself much more

clearly than when it was stifled by matter. The soul and thought are one; thought is the inseparable attribute of the Ego or individual soul. On its arrival in this world the soul is ready to register innumerable new thoughts; it is a *tabula rasa* upon which nothing has been inscribed.

This is a noble thought, if true, and one that wonderfully widens our narrow outlook. But, as I have said, I reserve my right of critical examination. Elsewhere George Pelham says, "We have an astral facsimile—the words are his—of our physical body, a facsimile which persists after the dissolution of the physical body." This would seem to be the astral body of the Theosophists. But the term "facsimile" is perplexing, as I have always believed that the particular form which Humanity actually has was entirely determined by the laws of our physical universe, that it was an adaptation to its surroundings, and that if a modification, however slight, were made in, for instance, the laws of gravity, the human shape would undergo a corresponding variation. Sir William Crookes has lately made some interesting observations on this subject. But to this question I will return again.

Now, the physics of the next world must be very different from the physics of this world, seeing that the next world is not material, or at least that its matter is excessively subtle. How then should the shape we men have in this world persist in the next?

Now, if we have an astral body which accompanies our Ego in the next world, and if that astral body consists of a fluid similar to what we suppose ether to be, or identical with that ether, this fluid must be

matter in some form, though matter obviously subject to quite other laws than those of our world of palpable substance. Moreover, there is no proof that the soul is not the resultant of the organic forces of this astral body. If this astral body, as is probable, in its turn suffers disintegration, there is no proof that the soul survives this second disaggregation. If all these suppositions were proved, the old problem concerning the nature of the soul would have been carried back a stage, but it would not have been solved.

But, as things are, this is, perhaps, to carry speculation too far. Let us curb our ambition and ask George Pelham what are the sensations felt immediately after death. Everything was dark, he says; by degrees consciousness returned and he awoke to a new life. "I could not distinguish anything at first.[1] Darkest hours just before dawn, you know that, Jim. I was puzzled, confused." This is probable enough. If things are thus, death must be a sort of birth into another world, and it is easy to understand that the soul which has been just born into that new world cannot see or comprehend much in it till some time after such birth.

James Howard remarked to George Pelham that he must have been surprised to find himself still living, to which George Pelham replied, "Perfectly so. Greatly surprised. I did not believe in a future life. It was beyond my reasoning powers. Now it is as clear to me as daylight." Elsewhere he says that when he found that he actually lived again he jumped for joy. This joy is comprehensible enough; those of us who

[1] *Proc. of S.P.R.*, vol. xiii. p. 301.

are resigned to the prospect of annihilation are few. The thought that death is annihilation makes us, against all principles of logic, shiver to the very marrow. Such a feeling perhaps points to a revolt of the soul within that knows itself immortal and cannot without a shiver of fear face the idea of non-existence, an idea in opposition to its very nature.

With the impressions of George Pelham may be compared those of another communicator called Frederick Atkin Morton, who had passed into the next world in quite a different way. This Morton had lately started a newspaper; anxiety, overwork, and perhaps other causes made him lose his reason. His insanity lasted but a short time; in one of its attacks he shot himself in the head and was killed on the spot. The first time that he tried to communicate, his remarks showed great incoherence;—no matter for surprise if Dr Hodgson's observations on this subject are recalled. But his thoughts soon became clear, and at the second sitting his communications were definite enough. This is how he relates to his brother Dick his impressions about his own death. He does not speak of suicide, an action which he probably committed without full consciousness of what he was doing, but at the end of the sitting Mrs Piper's hand wrote the word "Pistol." Death had been due to a pistol shot.[1] "When on Sunday," he says, "I began to lose my mental equilibrium, then suddenly I realised nothing and nobody." In answer to the question as to what his next experience was he goes on: "I found I was in this world. I did not know for the moment where I was

[1] *Proc. of S.P.R.*, vol. xiv. p. 18.

only I felt strange and freer; my head was light in weight, also my body . . . my thoughts began to clear when I observed I had departed from my material body. Ever since then I have been trying to reach you, Dick. I saw a light and many faces beckoning me on and trying to comfort me, showing and assuring me I should soon be all right, and almost instantly I found I was. Then I called for you and tried to tell you all about where and how I was, and, with one exception, this is the only chance I have had. Now you see I am taking advantage of the opportunity."

After the question of how a man passes into the next world, the most interesting one to us is how he feels when he gets there. Generally speaking, the reports are satisfactory. One of Professor Hyslop's uncles, though he seems to have had a happy life here, says to his nephew, among other things,[1] "I would not return for all I ever owned—music, flowers, walks, drives, pleasures of all kinds, books and everything." Another communicator, John Hart, the first sitter to whom George Pelham appeared, said on his own first appearance, "Our world is the abode of Peace and Plenty." If this is the case, what a pleasant surprise awaits us, for in this world we have not much experience of Peace and Plenty. But I fear that John Hart has exaggerated; every day the Reaper's sickle casts from this world into the other such elements of discord, not to reckon those who must long ago have been there, that I wonder what means are taken to prevent their creating a disturbance. However this may be, if when we leave this world we

[1] *Proc. of S.P.R.*, vol. xvi. p. 315.

pass into another, let us hope that the new world will be a better place than the old one, or else we shall have every reason to regret that death is not annihilation.

But George Pelham, in his turn, assures us that we do not lose by the change. He died, it will be remembered, at the age of thirty-two. When Dr Hodgson asked him whether he had not gone too soon, he replied with emphasis, "No, Hodgson, no, not too soon."

If, however, spirits are happy, more or less happy, according to the spiritualists, as they are more or less developed—and there seems nothing inadmissible in this theory—we must suppose that their happiness is not purely contemplative. One could soon have enough of such happiness as that. They are active; they are, as we are, occupied, though we cannot understand wherein their occupation consists. That this is so is affirmed and reaffirmed in the sittings, and we might assume it, even if the spirits did not assert it. George Pelham says to his friend, James Howard, that he will have an occupation soon.[1] The first time that I read this statement, in a review which only reproduced a short fragment and in no way gave the real effect of these sittings, I remember that the impression produced on me was very disagreeable. How unsophisticated, I thought, must these so-called investigators be not to see that such a phrase as that cannot come from a spirit; it bears too clearly the stamp of earth!

Since then reflection has made me admit that spirits might very well also have their occupations; the

[1] *Proc. of S.P.R.*, vol. xiii. p. 301.

next world, if it exists, must be a sphere of fresh activity. Work is the universal law. When George Pelham was asked in what consisted the occupations of spirits, he replied that they were like the noblest occupations of men, and consisted in helping others to advance. This reply will doubtless not satisfy those who are actuated only by an idle curiosity, but it contains a profound philosophic truth. If our varied occupations upon earth are regarded from a somewhat superior point of view, it will be seen that their ultimate end is nothing else than the perfection of mankind. Those of us who have evolved furthest realise this, and the rest do not; the case must be the same in the next world, though George Pelham does not say so. All our efforts and exertions are regarded with indifference by nature who has no use for them, but the necessities of life make men feel that they are brothers, and oblige them to polish one another, like the stones of the beach rolled to and fro by the waves and rounded and polished by rubbing one against another. Willingly or not, consciously or unconsciously, we force one another to advance and to improve in all respects. The world has been, I think with justice, compared to a crucible in which souls are purified by pain and work and prepared for higher ends. I should not like to go as far as Schopenhauer and say that it is a mere penal settlement.

A celebrated English medium, William Stainton Moses, in a book well known to spiritualist readers, *Spirit Teachings*, developed, or rather allowed his spirit-guides to develop, the theory that souls leave this earth taking with them all their desires and all

their evil passions. Having no body in the next world to enable them to gratify these desires they are subjected to a veritable punishment of Tantalus. Thereupon they endeavour to satisfy their material passions at least, if I may so say, vicariously; they urge on incarnate men, all unaware, to abandon themselves to these vices and passions. They incite the gambler to play, the drunkard to drink; in a word, they push, as far as in them lies, every vicious man to the bottom of the abyss created by his own vice; crime and debauchery intoxicate them and fill them with joy. Further developed and noble souls, in spite of all their efforts, are unable to conjure away the influence of the undeveloped and evil souls. In a word, we have here the old fable of demons and angels arranged to suit the doctrines of modern spiritualism. It is indeed the old fable with a difference; demons desire the perdition of man from jealousy, because being themselves eternally condemned they wish to drag down with them as many souls as possible; the evil souls of Stainton Moses desire the perdition of man to gratify their own bad inclinations. Demons are spirits, wicked indeed, but yet spirits, whereas the evil souls of Stainton Moses are only miserable ghosts driven mad by love of matter. Certainly everything is possible, as Professor Flournoy says, but this theory is somewhat astonishing, for it seems to make the inhabitants of the next world gravitate round our miserable earth, and is like the old astronomical theory that placed our little globe in the centre of the universe. If there be another world, it is hard to believe that its inhabitants spend the greater part of their time in

attending to us, some of them to harm us and the rest to do us good.

Professor William Romaine Newbold, in a sitting which took place on June 19, 1895, asked George Pelham what we ought to think of this theory of Stainton Moses.[1]

Professor NEWBOLD.—"Does the soul carry with it into its new life all its passions and animal appetites?"

GEORGE PELHAM.—"Oh, no, indeed, not at all. Why, my good friend and scholar, you would have this world of ours a decidedly material one if it were so."

Professor NEWBOLD.—"The writings of Stainton Moses claimed that the soul carried with it all its passions and appetites, and was very slowly purified of them."

GEORGE PELHAM.—"It is all untrue."

Professor NEWBOLD.—"And that the souls of the bad hover over the earth goading sinners on to their own destruction."

GEORGE PELHAM.—"Not so. Not at all so. I claim to understand this, and it is emphatically not so. Sinners are sinners only in one life."

The result of this denial of Moses's doctrine was that George Pelham was asked to find Stainton Moses and beg him to come himself and communicate. Here is a fragment of conversation between Professor Newbold and the discarnate Stainton Moses.

Professor NEWBOLD.—"You taught that evil spirits tempt sinners to their own destruction?"

[1] *Proc. of S.P.R.*, vol. xiv. p. 36.

W. S. MOSES.—"I have found out differently since I came over here. This particular statement given me by my friends as their medium when I was in the body is not true."[1]

Professor NEWBOLD.—"Your second statement was that the soul carries its passions and appetites with it."

W. S. MOSES.—"Material passions. Untrue. It is not so. I believed that we had every desire after reaching this life as when in the body, but I find that we leave all such behind; in other words, evil thoughts die with the body."

So on this point the teaching of George Pelham differs from that of Stainton Moses. But, says Professor Newbold, for the most part they agree pretty well.

Now when we reach this other world it is certain that we shall at first be completely at a loss there, as all that we here regard as indispensable conditions of existence will there be lacking. Spirits say that they do not perceive matter which is for them as if non-existent, whereas here present-day science asserts that outside matter moved by force there is nothing. It would be strange if the science of to-morrow were to prove that matter is only a sort of temporary illusion of mind. Here we conceive nothing outside space and time, whereas spirits seem to have but confused notions of space and time. Such, in the first place, is the view which they constantly assert; and, in the next place, if they are asked, for example, how long it is since they died they are generally

[1] In another sitting W. S. Moses says that, as he held this view very strongly in life, he felt sure that he had been told it by his spirit-guides.

unable to say. In their communications again, they often relate as occurring in the present actions that have taken place long ago. I have said already that George Pelham has often been asked to go and see what certain absent persons are doing and to return and report it; he has generally been successful, but he has sometimes made the curious mistake of taking the past for the present. Here is an illustration. He is told to go and see what Mrs Howard, absent at the time, was doing; he returns and reports. Dr Hodgson writes to ask Mrs Howard what she was doing at the time of the sitting, and hears from her in reply that she did none of the things reported on the day of the sitting, but that she had done them all in the course of the afternoon and evening of the preceding day.[1] It seems likely that George Pelham had read the thoughts of Mrs Howard, and in his inability to appreciate time had taken the past for the present.

The same sort of thing seems to occur in the case of space. Phinuit, to oblige Professor Newbold, goes to find Stainton Moses. Phinuit says that he inhabits a great sphere, and that Stainton Moses lives in a very distant part of this sphere. But in spite of this he brings him back almost at once. When the medium is presented with objects likely to attract the so-called spirits with whom the sitters are anxious to communicate, these spirits for the most part arrive at once, no matter where they may have died; John Hart, who died at Naples, communicates two days afterwards at Boston. But it is hardly to be presumed that the spirits are there waiting for us.

[1] *Proc. of S.P.R.*, vol. xiii. pp. 305, 306.

If their appearance can be hastened or delayed by sympathy or antipathy, on the other hand what we call distance seems not to disturb them in the least; and yet we are perpetually finding in the communications such phrases as, "Every day I am getting further from you," "Now I am very far away from you." But such phrases are probably not to be interpreted literally. The spirits go further from us as they make progress in the spiritual world and doubtless also as the things of this world occupy less and less place in their recollections.

The spirits see us but they do not see our bodies, since they do not perceive matter. They see the spirit within us but it appears to them more or less obscure, as long as it is within the body. "It is by the spiritual part of your being that I see you," says George Pelham, "that I am able to follow you and to tell you from time to time what you are doing."

And what do they think of our life upon earth? Here is a quotation from George Pelham which will tell us:[1] "Remember we always shall have our friends in the dream life, *i.e.*, your life so to speak, which will attract us for ever and ever, and so long as we have any friends sleeping in the material world; you to us are more like as we understand sleep, you look shut up as one in prison."

Professor Hyslop had a sister who died as a very young child; she sends a short message to her brother saying that he dreams while she lives and that she sends him her love.

Our life then would seem to be but a sleep accom-

[1] *Proc. of S.P.R.*, vol. xiii. p. 362.

panied by dreams which are sometimes terrible nightmares. If this be so we can but hope for dawn and waking, and wish soon to hear the crowing of the cock which will put to flight the phantoms of the night. Happy should we be if we had a certainty that it would be so!

This reminds me of a fine passage in a Spanish poet, which I cannot refrain from quoting: "To live is to dream; experience teaches that man dreams what he is till the moment of awakening. The king dreams that he is a king and passes his days in the error, giving orders and disposing of life and property. The rich man dreams the wealth that is the cause of his anxiety; the poor man dreams the poverty and need from which he suffers. I too dream that I am here laden with chains, and in bygone days I dreamt that I was happy. Our dreams are but dreams within a dream."

So our world may be compared with the cave of which Plato speaks in the Seventh Book of the *Republic*. In the conversation between Dr Hodgson and George Pelham, when George Pelham promised that if he were the first to die and if he found that he had another life he would do all that he could to prove its existence, they referred to the old Platonic myth. In the communications of the so-called George Pelham allusion was made to the allegory, and that justifies me in briefly recalling it.

Plato imagines prisoners who from their birth have been enchained in a dark cave in such a way that they are not able either to move or to turn their heads, and can only look straight in front of them.

Behind and above the captives a great fire burns, and between the fire and the captives men pass to and fro carrying in their hands vessels, statues, images of animals and plants, and many other objects. The shadows of these men and of the objects that they carry are thrown upon that wall of the cavern which is opposite to the captives, who thus know nothing of the external world but these shadows which they take to be realities, and they spend their time discussing the shadows, naming them and classifying them.

One of the captives is carried off from the gloomy place and transported into the external world. At first the light dazzles him and he can distinguish nothing. But by degrees, as time goes on, his sight adapts itself to its surroundings and he learns to look upon the stars and moon, and the sun itself. When he has been brought back into the cave and again sits beside his companions, he takes part in their discussions and tries to make them understand that what they take for realities are only shadows. But they, confident in the results of their lengthy reflections on the subject, laugh him to scorn. The same thing would happen to a soul which had dwelt for a time in the world of spirit and had been brought back into the world of matter.

When Plato's captive is brought back into the cave, his eyes, no longer used to half-darkness, can distinguish nothing for some time; if he is questioned about the shadows of the passing objects he does not see them, and his answers are full of confusion. Perhaps something like this happens to the discarnate spirits who try to manifest themselves to us

by borrowing the organism of a medium. Such at least is the suggestion of George Pelham; in that way he would explain the incoherence, the confusion, the false statements made by many of the communicating spirits:[1] "For us to get into communication with you, we have to enter into your sphere, as one like yourself asleep. This is just why we make mistakes as you call them, or get confused and muddled so to put it. I am not less intelligent now. But there are many difficulties. I am far clearer on all points than I was, shut up in the body. 'Don't view me with a critic's eye, but pass my imperfections by.'"

George Pelham also tells us how we may summon the spirits of those with whom we desire to communicate. The thoughts of his friends reach him; if he is to come and make himself manifest his friends must think of him. He adds that, so far from the communications being injurious to the communicating spirits or the sitters, they are positively to be desired.

On one occasion Dr Hodgson asked what became of the medium during the trance.[2]

GEORGE PELHAM.—"She passes out as your ethereal goes out when you sleep."

Dr HODGSON.—"Well, do you see that there is a conflict, because the brain substance is, so to speak, saturated with her tendencies of thought?"

GEORGE PELHAM.—"No, not that, but the solid substance called brain—it is difficult to control it

[1] *Proc. of S.P.R.*, vol. xiii. pp. 362, 363.

[2] *Proc. of S.P.R.*, vol. xiii. p. 434.

simply because it is material; her mind leaves the brain empty as it were, and I myself, or other spiritual mind or thought, take the empty brain, and there is where and when the conflict arises."

All this is very unintelligible in the present condition of our knowledge. But here is another passage even less intelligible and one which in its *naïveté* almost suggests that the speaker is playing with us. George Pelham says to his friend James Howard at the first sitting at which James Howard was present:[1] "Your voice, Jim, I can distinguish with your accent and articulation, but it sounds like a big brass drum. Mine would sound to you like the faintest whisper."

J. HOWARD.—"Our conversation, then, is something like telephoning?"

GEORGE PELHAM.—"Yes."

J. HOWARD.—"By long-distance telephone."

George Pelham laughs.

Understand who may! Are these only analogies? One does not know what to think. Another difficult thing to understand is the "weakness" which the spirits complain that they feel, especially towards the end of the sittings. George Pelham actually says that we must not demand from spirits just what they have not got, namely, strength. If the spirits mean that the medium's "light" grows weak and no longer provides them with the unknown something that they require in order to communicate, why do they not express themselves more clearly?

It will perhaps be thought that I have dwelt a

[1] *Proc. of S.P.R.*, vol. xiii. p. 301.

little too long on what I have called the philosophy of George Pelham. I have thought it best to do so, and there is no harm done so long as I leave it to my readers to believe as much as they like.

CHAPTER XII

William Stainton Moses—What George Pelham thinks of him —How Imperator and his assistants have replaced Phinuit.

FOR those of my readers who are unacquainted with spiritualist literature, and in order to facilitate the understanding of what follows, I must give a short sketch of the life of the English medium, William Stainton Moses. He was born in 1839, and died in 1892. He studied at Oxford, and was then curate at Maughold, near Ramsey, in the Isle of Man. His great kindness made him beloved by all his parishioners there. When an epidemic of smallpox drove even the doctors away, he remained faithfully at his post, caring for bodies and comforting souls. But he had precarious health, and was overworked at Maughold. He obtained another curacy, where there was less work, at Saint George's, Douglas, also in the Isle of Man. It was at Douglas that the friendship, broken only by death, was formed between him and Dr Stanhope Speer. A throat-affection soon after prevented his preaching, and he left the service of the Church to give himself up to teaching. He went to London, where he became tutor to the son of Dr Stanhope Speer, who was

living there. Finally, at the beginning of 1871, he obtained a mastership in University College School, and there he remained till 1889.

Till 1872 William Stainton Moses knew nothing of spiritualism. If he had vaguely heard of it, he had no doubt hastened to condemn the new superstition which carried off sheep from his flock.

However, in 1872, Mrs Speer, being ill and confined to her room, read Dale Owen's book, *The Debatable Land.* The book interested her, and she asked Stainton Moses to read it. He did so, but only to please his friend's wife. Nevertheless he became curious to know how much truth there might be in the matter. He visited mediums, and took Dr Speer with him, and both were soon convinced that here was a new force.

It was at the time when spiritualistic phenomena were attracting much attention in the United States and England, and when learned bodies were appealed to from all sides to put an end to these phantasmagoria. It was the period when the materialised apparition of Katie King appeared and talked to numerous spectators who came from widely separated places. Sir William Crookes could see her and photograph her as much as he pleased; heedless of his environment, he published what seemed to him the truth.

Thereupon the man whose brain had till then been considered one of the most lucid and best organised which humanity has produced, lost considerably in the opinion of his contemporaries. But no doubt the future will avenge him.

The Speer family and Stainton Moses now began

to hold sittings by themselves. Stainton Moses[1] at once showed himself to be an extraordinarily powerful medium. Neither he nor anybody else had suspected this mediumship till now. Many other mediumships have been revealed in the same way, suddenly, by experiment. This shows that faculties, valuable for the study of these disturbing problems, may exist in some of us who least expect it.

The physical phenomena which occurred in the presence of Stainton Moses were numerous and varied.

These phenomena cannot be due to the subconsciousness of Stainton Moses, and they seem to point to external intervention more clearly than do the communications he has left us. The best known of these communications is entitled *Spirit Teachings*. It is a long dialogue between self-styled disincarnated spirits and Stainton Moses. Stainton Moses also wrote automatically without being entranced. *Spirit Teachings*, among other things, was obtained in this way. The medium is still saturated with his theological education ; he discusses, he cavils, and his spirit-guides show him the absurdity of a great part of his beliefs. We know that his robust faith began to be shaken by doubt about the time when his mediumship revealed itself. If we left the above-mentioned phenomena out of consideration, we might not unreasonably be tempted to see in these dialogues only a doubling of personality ; on one hand the personality of the clergyman defending his doctrines foot by foot, on the other hand the personality of

[1] For an account of the mediumship of W. Stainton Moses the reader s referred to Mr F. W. H. Myers's articles in the *Proc. of S.P.R.*, vol. ix. p. 245, and vol. xi. p. 24.

the reasoning man formulating his own objections to them.

The self-styled spirit-guides of Stainton Moses formed a united group obeying one chief, who called himself Imperator. Rector, Doctor, Prudens, were his subordinates. Naturally, they asserted they were the souls of men who had lived on earth; the above names were borrowed for the circumstance; their real names were revealed to Stainton Moses, who wrote them in one of his note-books, but always refused to publish them. I beg the reader to observe this detail, which will become important later.

Stainton Moses had the temperament of an apostle but not at all that of a man of science. The contents of the messages interested him much more than their origin. The former clergyman liked better to discuss a doubtful text than patiently to accumulate facts while guarding himself in all possible ways against fraud. Certainly he was scrupulously honourable; no conscious falsehood ever passed his lips, but his temperament makes his interpretations doubtful, and with reason. He was one of the first members of the Society for Psychical Research, but the methods which the Society adopted from the beginning were not of a kind to please him; for his part, he believed that abundant proofs already existed, and he saw no use in minutely examining a large number of small facts.

Dr Speer's son, whom Stainton Moses had taught, praises his judgment, his modesty, his inexhaustible charity. Modest he really was, and it never occurred to him to be vain of the miraculous phenomena which occurred in his presence; he never thought of mak-

ing a venal use of his mediumship. Although he published his communications, he hardly ever published reports of his phenomena. It was Frederic Myers who published these from the note-books of the Speer family and of Stainton Moses himself. The notes are in agreement, although they were made separately, and without any idea of publication.

The son of Dr Speer asserts that Stainton Moses never refused a discussion, and never despised an opponent. But, on the other hand, Frederic Myers, who knew him well, assures us that he bore contradiction badly, and was quickly irritated by it. The manner in which he retired from the Society for Psychical Research tends to prove that it is Myers who is right. The son of Dr Speer, in his gratitude to his former master, must have deceived himself.

I will now explain the reason of this long preamble about Stainton Moses. At a sitting which took place on June 19, 1895, Professor Newbold, conversing with George Pelham, obtained from him the enunciation of doctrines which contradicted those given by Stainton Moses in *Spirit Teachings*. Professor Newbold[1] then asked,—

"Do you know of Stainton Moses?"

GEORGE PELHAM.—"No, not very much. Why?"

Professor NEWBOLD.—"Did you ever know of him or know what he did?"

G. P.—"I only have an idea from having met him here."

Professor N.—"Can you tell me what he said?"

G. P.—"No, only that he was W. Stainton Moses. I found him for E.[2] and Hodgson."

[1] *Proc. of S.P.R.*, vol. xiv. p. 36. [2] Another communicator.

Professor N.—"Did you tell Hodgson this?"

G. P.—"I do not think so."

At the sitting on the next day, Professor Newbold returns to the charge.

'Can you bring Stainton Moses here?"

G. P.—"I will do my best."

Professor N.—"Is he far advanced?"

G. P.—"Oh, no, I should say not. He will have to think for a while yet."

Professor N.—"What do you mean?"

G. P.—"Well, have you forgotten all I told you before?"

Professor N.—"You mean about progression by repentance?"

G. P.—"Certainly I do."

Professor N.—"Was not he good?"

G. P.—"Yes, but not perfect by any means."

Professor N.—"Was he a true medium?"

G. P.—"True, yes, very true; his 'light' was very true, yet he made a great many mistakes and deceived himself."

Phinuit, sent to find Stainton Moses, ends by bringing him. George Pelham warns the sitter against the confusions and incoherences of Stainton Moses's communications. "When he arrives," says George Pelham, "I will wake him up."

Professor N.—"Is he asleep?"

G. P.—"Oh, Billie, you are stupid, I fear, at times. I do not mean wake him up in a material sense."

Professor N.—"Nor did I."

G. P.—"Well, then, old man, don't be wasting light."

Professor N.—"I'm not wasting light, but I am obliged to find out what you mean."

G. P.—"Well, this is what I wish also."

Professor N.—"Stainton Moses has been nearly three years in the spirit. . . . Do you mean to say that he is not yet free from confusion?"

These explanatory passages would be of great value if we were sure that we were not dealing with a secondary personality of Mrs Piper.

Later still, George Pelham returns to the probable mental confusion of Stainton Moses, and to the necessity for taking certain precautions in order to obtain clear communications. He was quite right. These sittings, in which Stainton Moses was the self-styled communicator, are exactly those which make the spiritualist hypothesis most difficult to accept. All the exact information given existed already in the minds of those present; all the rest was untrue. Stainton Moses had an excellent chance of proving his identity. We have said that he had written down the real names of his "spirit-guides" or "controls" in one of his note-books. At the time these sittings were taking place in America, Frederic Myers, in England, was studying these note-books in order to publish so much of them as he thought fit. He knew these names, but I believe he was the only person in the world who knew them. Stainton Moses was told, "Give us the names of your spirit-guides; it will be a splendid proof. Mr Myers knows them, but we do not. We will send them to him, and if they are correct we shall no longer be able to have a reasonable doubt of your identity." The self-styled Stainton Moses seemed perfectly to understand what was asked of him; he gave the names, and every one of them was wrong.

In October 1896 Dr Hodgson made George Pelham understand the necessity of obtaining exact information from Stainton Moses, in order that the problem, which seemed to interest George Pelham as much as it did Dr Hodgson, might be solved. Stainton Moses then said that he would ask the help of his former spirit-guides. The latter communicated directly several times, in November and December 1896 and in January 1897. But finally they demanded that the "light" of the medium should be put at their exclusive disposal. Imperator explained that these unconsidered experiments with all sorts of spirits—more or less undeveloped and disturbed—as communicators, had made Mrs Piper as a medium into a machine "worn out," and incapable of being really useful. He Imperator, and his friends would be able to restore her in time. But they must have the right to keep away such communicators as they should judge likely to injure her again. Dr Hodgson explained the importance of trying this experiment to Mrs Piper in her normal state. Mrs Piper, docile as usual, consented. The last appearance of Phinuit occurred on January 26, 1897. Phinuit had formerly said, "They find fault with me, they won't understand that I do all I can, but when they do not hear my voice any longer they will regret me." However, he is not regretted. Whoever the controls Imperator, Rector, Doctor and Prudens may be, since they have controlled the communications, these have acquired a coherence, clearness and exactness unknown before; errors are rare, and evident falsehood unknown. Besides, Mrs Piper enters the trance differently. Formerly there was

more or less painful struggle; she had violent convulsions and spasmodic movements; at present she enters the trance quietly, as if she were falling asleep.

If, in truth, Mrs Piper entranced is merely an automaton, a "machine," of which use is made to communicate between two worlds, it is perfectly evident that, on this side as well as the other, it is well to have honourable and experienced experimenters. Phinuit was not perhaps wanting in experience, but he was assuredly wanting in honesty; or possibly he did not perceive the extreme importance of veracity in these matters; he did not lie for the pleasure of lying, but he did not hesitate to lie, if needs were, to escape from some difficulty.

The new report of Professor Hyslop, which I am about briefly to analyse, will show us the new phase of Mrs Piper's mediumship. The results are already good. Imperator asserts nevertheless that the "machine" still needs repair, and that he will obtain still more wonderful results by-and-by.

CHAPTER XIII

Professor Hyslop and the journalists—The so-called "confession" of Mrs Piper—Precautions taken by Professor Hyslop during his experiments — Impressions of the sittings.

THE last report[1] we possess of the phenomena accompanying Mrs Piper's trance is that of Professor James Hervey Hyslop, of Columbia University, New York. This report appeared in November 1901. The minutes of the sittings, the notes, the remarks of the sitter, the discussion of hypotheses, the account of experiments made at the University in order to throw light on certain points, all together make a report of 650 pages of close reading. It refers, notwithstanding, only to sixteen sittings, of which the first took place on December 23, 1898. But the smallest incidents and the slightest arguments are scrupulously weighed. It is, in short, a work of considerable extent.

Professor Hyslop has an absolutely sincere and very lucid mind. It is a pleasure to follow him through this mass of facts and arguments; everything is scrupulously classified, and the whole is illuminated by a high intelligence. Professor Hyslop occupies with good right an eminent place

[1] Professor Hyslop's report is contained in *Proc. of S.P.R.*, vol. xvi.

amongst the thinkers of the United States. Besides his classes, he gives numerous lectures, which are well attended.

The report he has published has been long waited for. As he is a man of mark and has long occupied himself with Psychical Research, the inquisitive journalists on the other side of the Atlantic quickly found out that he had been experimenting with Mrs Piper. He was interviewed; he was prudent, and contented himself with recommending the reporters to study the preceding reports published upon the same case. But reporters are not so easily contented; they have to satisfy an exacting master in the public, which wants to know everything, and which would cease to purchase any paper simple enough to say, "I have done all I could to get information on this point for you, but I have failed." The public will have none of such honesty as that, though if a falsehood is offered, it is not angry; in the first place, because at the moment it does not recognise the falsehood, and in the second, because by the time it finds out it is busy over something else. Consequently, as they must live, journalists find themselves sometimes obliged to invent. So the reporters put into Professor Hyslop's mouth the following sensational words, "In a year I shall be able to demonstrate the immortality of the soul scientifically." These words were reproduced by the greater number of the American papers and by a large number of English ones. Specialist publications in France in their turn commented on them. It will be understood with what eagerness the report was expected after this

by all men interested in psychical studies. They have not been disappointed. Professor Hyslop is too modest for such unbounded pretension; he knows that the great problem will not be solved at one stroke, nor by one man. "I do not claim," he says, "to demonstrate anything scientifically, not even the facts I offer." This phrase does not at all resemble the declaration put into his mouth. But if he has not definitively and scientifically proved the immortality of the soul, he has approached the problem very nearly and thrown a vivid light on more than one point. In any case the journalists have advertised him thoroughly, perhaps without intending it.

Speaking of journalists, I must relate another quite recent incident, which is interesting to us, as it concerns Mrs Piper personally. One of the editors of the *New York Herald* interviewed Mrs Piper and on October 20, 1901, published an article somewhat speciously entitled "The Confessions of Mrs Leonora Piper." In this article it was stated that Mrs Piper intended to give up the work she had been doing for the S.P.R. in order to devote herself to other and more congenial pursuits, that it was on account of her own desire to understand the phenomena that she first allowed her trances to be investigated and placed herself in the hands of scientific men, with the understanding that she should submit to any tests they chose to apply, and that now, after fourteen years' work, the subject not being yet cleared up, she felt disinclined for further investigation. Her own view of the phenomena was expressed in this article as follows:—

"The theory of telepathy strongly appeals to me as the most plausible and genuinely scientific solution of the problem. . . . I do not believe that spirits of the dead have spoken through me when I have been in the trance state. . . . . It may be that they have, but I do not affirm it. . . . I never heard of anything being said by myself during a trance which might not have been latent in my own mind or in the mind of the person in charge of the sitting, or in the mind of the person trying to get communication with someone in another state of existence, or of some companion present with such a person, or in the mind of some absent person alive somewhere else in the world."

In the *Boston Advertiser* of October 25, 1901, there appeared a statement dictated by Mrs Piper to a representative of the paper, saying that she had made no such statement as that published in the *New York Herald* to the effect that "spirits of the departed do not control" her, and later in the *Boston Journal* for October 29, 1901, there appeared an account of interviews with Dr Hodgson and Mrs Piper, in which Mrs Piper stated that though she had said "something to the effect that" she "would never hold another sitting with Mr Hodgson," and that she "would die first" to a *New York Herald* reporter the summer before, when she gave the original interview, she now intended, regardless of whatever may have been said, to go on with the present arrangement with Dr Hodgson and the Society as formerly. She still held and expressed the view that the manifestations are not spiritualistic, and felt that the telepathic theory is more probable than the spiritualistic hypothesis.

It will be seen that in none of these reports is there any justification for the somewhat sensational use of the word "Confessions" in the original article. Mrs Piper made no statements, as the use of that word suggests, concerning the source of her knowledge; she expressed her preference for one of two hypothetical explanations of the origin of that knowledge. No question was raised in the original article as to Mrs Piper's honesty or as to the genuineness of her trance phenomena; on the contrary she is represented by the reporter of the *New York Herald* as holding a view of those phenomena which asserts that they are not fraudulent. She expresses her personal preference for the telepathic hypothesis rather than the spiritualist hypothesis as an explanation of them; on this point it should be remembered that the medium is not in a more favourable position for forming an opinion than those who sit with her, since she does not remember what passes while she is in trance, and is therefore dependent for her knowledge on the reports of the sitters.

The allegation of the *New York Herald* as to her intention to discontinue the sittings was unfounded; after a suspension of some months owing to the state of her health, she gave a sitting to Dr Hodgson on October 21, the day after the article in the *Herald* appeared, and it was then arranged to resume the sittings after a further interval of three months. This has been done, and Mrs Piper gave sittings to Dr Hodgson all through the spring of last year, and is still doing so through the winter of 1902-1903.

The reader will excuse this digression on a subject which made some stir at the time, and is interesting

as throwing light on the medium's own attitude towards her trance phenomena.

To return to Professor Hyslop's report.

Professor Hyslop told only his wife and Dr Hodgson of his intention to have sittings with Mrs Piper. The days were fixed, not with Mrs Piper in the normal state, but with Imperator, the chief of the present controls, while she was in trance. Now we must never forget that Mrs Piper has no recollection of what happens during the trance. Professor Hyslop's name was not given to Imperator; Dr Hodgson called him the "four times friend," because Professor Hyslop had at first asked for four sittings. I should not call this a transparent pseudonym.

Professor Hyslop had once been present at one of Mrs Piper's sittings, and his name had been pronounced. Although there seemed to be small chance of her recognising him, as the sitting had taken place six years before, and Professor Hyslop did not then wear a beard as he now does, he put on a mask while he was in a closed carriage at some distance from Mrs Piper's house. He kept on his mask during the first two sittings, and then the precaution became useless, because his father's name was pronounced by Mrs Piper at the end of the second. Dr Hodgson presented him as Mr Smith, which name is given to all new sitters. Professor Hyslop never spoke before Mrs Piper in her normal state, except twice to utter short sentences, and he took pains to change his voice as much as possible. He avoided all contact with the medium throughout all the sitting. Most of the facts were obtained from the communicators without previous questioning. When Professor Hys-

lop was obliged to ask a question, he did so in such a way that it did not contain a suggestion of the answer. To prevent Mrs Piper's seeing him during the sitting, he kept always behind her right shoulder, the easiest position too for reading the writing.

But when we recollect that Mrs Piper's head is always buried in pillows during the trance, we shall think this a superfluous precaution.

As I have said in the preceding chapter, Phinuit no longer manifests. This is what now appears to take place on the "other side." Rector places himself in the "machine," and it is he who produces the automatic writing. This Rector seems to have had much experience of these phenomena. The communicator comes close to Rector and speaks to him, in whatever manner spirits may speak. Imperator remains outside the "machine," and prevents the approach of all those likely to injure it, or who have nothing to do with the sitter. Besides, before he allows a communicator to enter the "machine," he gives him advice as to what he should do, and helps him to arrange and clear up his ideas. Imperator's two other helpers, Doctor and Prudens, appear but rarely. George Pelham appears sometimes, when his services are needed.

The communicators were few in number during Professor Hyslop's sixteen sittings. They were, his father, Robert Hyslop, who gave much the most important communications; his uncle, Carruthers; his cousin, Robert Harvey MacClellan; his brother Charles, who died in 1864, aged four years and a half; his sister Annie, who also died in 1864, aged

three years; his uncle, James MacClellan; and lastly, another MacClellan named John.

Professor Hyslop's father, Robert Hyslop, is the communicator who takes up the greater part of the sittings. But he cannot remain long in the "machine," he complains of having his ideas confused, of suffocating or getting weak; for example, he says, "I am getting weak, James, I am going away for a moment; wait for me." During these absences Imperator sends another member of the family in his place "so that the light may not be wasted." It would thus seem that the "weakness" which the spirits complain of is only a feeling they have when they have been in contact with the "machine" for a certain time; Imperator says that then they are like a sick and delirious man. This explains the words of George Pelham, "You must not ask of us just what we have not got—strength." But it is indispensable to say that the former communicators did not explain enough about this weakness; and they were not sufficiently well inspired to go out when they felt it coming on. Dr Hodgson at last, having often remarked this semi-delirium of the communicators towards the end of a sitting, when the light was failing, succeeded in suggesting to them to go away when they felt themselves getting weak. The possibility of this suggestion is interesting to those who prefer the hypothesis of telepathy.

CHAPTER XIV

The communications of Mr Robert Hyslop—Peculiar expressions—Incidents.

AFTER we have read the report of Professor Hyslop, weighed the slightest facts with him, discussed the arguments for and against with him, we cannot be surprised at his having ended by adhering to the spiritualist hypothesis; in other words, we cannot be surprised that, in spite of his previous prejudice, he should have ended by exclaiming, "I have been talking with my father, my brother, my uncles. Whatever supernormal powers we may be pleased to attribute to Mrs Piper's secondary personalities, it would be difficult to make me believe that these secondary personalities could have thus completely reconstituted the mental personality of my dead relatives. To admit this would involve me in too many improbabilities. I prefer to believe that I have been talking to my dead relatives in person; it is simpler." This is the conclusion at which Professor Hyslop has arrived, and he takes the reader with him, in spite of himself. As may be imagined, I do not pretend to do the same in a hurried sketch like the present. Here, as was the case with George Pelham, the incidents quoted are only examples selected from a great number; some important detail of the said incidents may even be

accidentally omitted. If the forgotten detail lays the incident open to some great objection, the reader must blame me only for it, and turn to Professor Hyslop's book for himself.[1]

Professor Hyslop's father, Mr Robert Hyslop, was a private person in the strictest sense of the word; he never did anything to attract public attention to him; he did not write in the papers, and never, or hardly ever, lived in towns. He was born in 1821, and lived on his farm in Ohio till 1889, when he went into a neighbouring State. He returned to his old home in August 1896, ill with a sort of cancer of the larynx. The old home then belonged to his brother-in-law, James Carruthers, and he died there on the 29th of the same month. In 1860 he had contracted a spinal affection, the result of over-exertion, and this had degenerated, some years later, into locomotor ataxy; he lost by degrees the use of one of his legs and used a crutch; there was afterwards an improvement, but he could never walk without a stick. In 1876 he had a slight attack of apoplexy, which affected his hearing, one ear being quite deaf. Three years before his death he further had the misfortune to lose his voice, probably from paralysis of the larynx. A year before his death a fresh affliction was added to all the others; he thought it was catarrh, but it was probably cancer of the larynx; and it was accompanied by frequent spasms which threatened his life.

In short, for thirty-five years at least, Mr Robert

[1] *Proc. of S.P.R.*, vol. xvi. In what follows here there is no attempt to give the actual words of Professor Hyslop's communicators *Trans.*

Hyslop was an invalid. His life was by necessity passed indoors, or at least on his farm. This life was necessarily without events calculated to attract a stranger's notice. There was consequently very little possibility that the medium could obtain information about him by normal means. But when an obscure man like Mr Robert Hyslop returns from the Beyond to establish his identity by relating a number of small facts, too slight and unimportant to have been observed outside his intimate circle, such a man furnishes us with a much stronger presumption in favour of a future life than a personage in public life could do. Even if the latter only reported incidents of his private life, it would be easier to suppose that the medium had been able to procure them. During nearly all his life, but principally during the last twenty years, the thoughts of Mr Robert Hyslop turned on a small number of subjects —his solicitude for his family; the administration of his farm, which gave him much care; the fulfilment of his religious duties, in which he never failed; and lastly, political events, which much interested him, because they naturally reacted upon his private affairs. Consequently the greater part of the facts I shall quote belonged to one or other of these four categories of his preoccupations.

But, to begin with, it will be useful to speak of a point which characterises an individual as clearly as his features do—I mean his speech. Each of us has his own language, his familiar expressions; each of us expresses himself in his own way under given circumstances. When Buffon said "the style is the man," he expressed an absolute truth. When some-

body talks to us by telephone, without giving his name, we say, without a shade of hesitation, "It is So-and-so. I know him by his style." I repeat that everybody has this individuality of expression; it is, however, less marked in educated people. But men only slightly cultivated use stereotyped expressions, above all when they are growing old; the language of some of them is almost entirely composed of aphorisms and proverbs. If Mr Robert Hyslop did not altogether belong to this class, he yet, his son tells us, used particular expressions, and always the same in analogous cases; some of them indeed were altogether peculiar to him.

Now, when he communicates through Mrs Piper, he uses the same language that he used when alive. Professor Hyslop has incessantly occasion to remark, "This expression is quite like my father; he would have used it when he was alive in such a case." There is even a passage of the communications so characteristic in this way that it is nearly too much so; it would almost suggest fraud. I will reproduce one of these passages.[1] "Keep quiet, don't worry about anything, as I used to say. It does not pay. You are not the strongest man, you know, and health is important for you. Cheer up now and be quite yourself. Remember it does not pay, and life is too short there for you to spend it in worrying. What you cannot have, be content without, but do not worry, and not for me. Devoted you were to me always, and I have nothing to complain of except your uneasy temperament, and that I will certainly help."

[1] *Proc. of S.P.R.*, vol. xvi. p. 40.

When a father has repeated the same advice in the same terms hundreds of times in his life, and when, after his death, he repeats it again through an intermediary, it must certainly be difficult to say, "That is not he; it is not my father."

I should much like to give the reader the greatest possible number of these small facts, which convince us almost in spite of ourselves. But it is impossible to do so without surrounding them with commentaries indispensable to bring out all their importance. Thus, Mr Robert had a horse named Tom, an old and faithful servant. It had grown too old to work, but he would not kill it. He pensioned it, so to speak, and left it to die a natural death on the farm. At one sitting he asks, "Where is Tom?" and as James Hyslop did not understand what Tom he was speaking of, the communicator added, "Tom, the horse, what has become of him?"

Mr Robert Hyslop wrote with quill pens, which he trimmed himself; he had often trimmed them for his son James. He recalls this detail about the quill pens at one of the sittings.

He was very bald, and had complained of feeling his head cold during the night. His wife made him a black cap which he wore once. At one of the sittings he spoke of this cap. James Hyslop, who had been away from home a long time, had never heard of any black cap. But he wrote to his stepmother, who corroborated the statement.

At another sitting the communicator, Robert Hyslop, said that there were always two bottles on his desk, one round and one square. Professor Hyslop was ignorant of this detail, as of the preceding. His

step-mother, when questioned, had difficulty in remembering this, but his brother recalled it at once; the round bottle held ink and the square one contained gum.

Another time Robert Hyslop asks, "Do you remember the penknife I cut my nails with?" "No, father, not very well." "The little penknife with the brown handle. I had it in my vest and then coat pocket. You certainly must remember it?" "Was this after you went west?" "Yes." Professor Hyslop was unaware of the existence of this penknife. He wrote separately to his step-mother, brother and sister, asking them if their father had possessed a brown-handled penknife with which he cut his nails, without telling them why he wanted this information. All three replied, "Yes, we have it still." But it appears that Mr Robert Hyslop did not keep the knife either in his coat or waistcoat pockets, but in his trousers pocket.

These little facts will suffice as examples. I will go on to more important ones.

Mr Robert Hyslop had a son who had caused him much anxiety all his life. He had often talked of these anxieties to his favourite son James, and had died carrying them with him into the grave. He speaks of them repeatedly during the sittings exactly as he did in life. "Don't you remember, James, that we often talked of your brother and the trouble he gave us? Don't worry about it any more, all will go well now, and if I know that you do not worry I shall be all right."

He remembers all the members of his family and names them correctly, except for two odd mistakes

of which I shall speak later. He alludes to incidents in the lives, and traits in the characters of each of them. He sends them expressions of affection, "Have I forgotten anybody, James, my son? I should not like to forget anybody." He specially asks after his youngest child, Henrietta; he wants to know if she has succeeded in her examinations, and he expresses delight when he hears that, on the whole, life promises well for her.

Mr Robert Hyslop was an orthodox Calvinist; he belonged to the small, very strict sect of Associate Presbyterians and refused to join the United Presbyterian Church in 1858. He was extremely rigid in religious matters. When he caused his son James to be educated, he hoped the latter would become a minister, though he left him free choice. When he saw his son modify his religious beliefs he was very much pained. By degrees, however, he became resigned. It is easy to understand from all this that religious preoccupations were in the foreground in his mind. He often talked of religion to his family, he read the Bible and numerous commentaries on it, and sometimes, rather than allow his family to go to the church of a less orthodox sect, he himself preached to them at home. Consequently, if he had not alluded to his former religious life during the sittings, the omission might have caused a grave doubt of his identity. But this is not the case; he constantly alludes to his ancient religious ideas.

At one of the first sittings he says, for example, "Do you remember what my feeling was about this life? Well, I was not so far wrong after all. I felt sure that there would be some knowledge of this life,

but you were doubtful, remember you had your own ideas, which were only yours, James."

This last phrase, "You have your own ideas," Professor Hyslop remarks, had been often repeated to him by his father in his lifetime. "He meant that I was the only one of his children who was sceptical, and this was true." Robert Hyslop's former religious ideas were the cause of a strange incident. One day Dr Hodgson said to him, "Mr Hyslop, you ought to look for my father and make friends with him. He had religious ideas like yours. I think you would understand each other very well, and I should be pleased." At a following sitting the communicator said to Dr Hodgson, "I have met your father; we talked, and we liked each other very much, but he was not very orthodox when he was alive." Dr Hodgson's father was really a Wesleyan —that is to say, he belonged to a very liberal sect. But in another place Robert Hyslop adds, "Orthodoxy does not matter here; I should have changed my mind about many things if I had known." In another sitting he says to his son, alluding to the telepathic hypothesis, "Let that thought theory alone. I made theories all my life, and what good did it do me? It only filled my mind with doubts." In short, it appears that Robert Hyslop, the rigid Calvinist, has greatly modified his views since he has been disincarnated.

At the last visit Professor Hyslop paid to his father, in January or February 1895, a long conversation took place between them on religious and philosophical subjects. Professor Hyslop spoke of his psychical studies. The possibility of communication

between the two worlds was discussed at length, and Swedenborg and his works were mentioned. During the sittings Robert Hyslop constantly returns to this conversation, which had made a profound impression on him; much more profound than would have been expected, considering his religious views. He recalls the points which were discussed by him and his son one after another, and adds, "You remember I promised to come back to you after I had left the body, and I have been trying to find an opportunity ever since." Now, no such promise had been made explicitly. But James Hyslop had written to his father on his deathbed, "Father, when all is over, you will try to come back to me." Robert Hyslop must from that moment have resolved to return if possible; and he must have believed he had told his son so, which was not the case.

When he was living in Ohio, Mr Robert Hyslop had a neighbour named Samuel Cooper. One day Cooper's dogs killed some sheep belonging to Robert Hyslop. An estrangement followed, which lasted several years. At one of the sittings in which Dr Hodgson represented Professor Hyslop, he asked a question which the latter had sent him in writing. Professor Hyslop hoped the question would turn his father's attention to the incidents of his life in Ohio. The question was, "Do you remember Samuel Cooper, and can you say anything about him?" The communicator replied, "James refers to the old friend I had in the West. I remember the visits we used to make to each other well, and the long talks we had concerning philosophical topics." At another sitting,

when Dr Hodgson was again alone, he returned to the same idea. "I had a friend named Cooper who was of a philosophical turn of mind and for whom I had great respect, with whom I had some friendly discussion and correspondence. I had some of his letters . . . you will find them." Another time, when Professor Hyslop was present, he said, "I am trying to remember Cooper's school." The next day he returns to the point, "You asked me, James, what I knew about Cooper. Did you think I was no longer friend of his? I had kept some of his letters; and I think they were with you." In all this there was not a trace of Samuel Cooper, and Professor Hyslop did not know what to think. He therefore put a direct question in order to bring his father back to the point he had in mind. "I wanted to know if you remembered anything about the dogs killing sheep?" "Oh, I should think I did . . . but I had forgotten all about it. That was what we had the discussion about. . . . Yes, very well, James, but just what you asked me this for I could not quite make out as he was no relation of mine . . . if I could have recalled what you were getting at I would have tried to tell you. He is here, but I see him seldom." This episode is interesting. All that Robert Hyslop said at first about Cooper has nothing to do with Samuel Cooper, but is entirely true of an old friend of his, Dr Joseph Cooper. Robert Hyslop had really had many philosophical discussions with him, and they had corresponded. Professor Hyslop had perhaps heard his name, but did not know that he was an old friend of his father. It was his step-mother who told him this, in the course of an inquiry he made amongst

his relatives to clear up doubtful incidents in the sittings. We see that disincarnated beings are capable of misunderstanding as well as ourselves.

But the following is the most dramatic incident. Professor Hyslop, remembering that his father had thought his last illness catarrh, while he himself believed it to be cancer of the larynx, asked the communicator a question aimed at bringing up the word "catarrh." He asked, "Do you know what the trouble was when you passed out?" The double meaning of the word "trouble" caused a curious misunderstanding, which the telepathic hypothesis will find it difficult to explain.

The communicator replied in distress, "No, I did not realise that we had the least trouble, James, ever. I thought we were always most congenial to each other. I do not remember any trouble—tell me what it was about? You do not mean with me, do you?" "Father, you misunderstand me. I mean with the sickness." "Oh, yes, I hear—I know now. Yes, my stomach." "Yes, was there anything else the matter?" "Yes, stomach, liver and head—difficult to breathe. My heart, James, made me suffer. Don't you remember what a trouble I had to breathe? I think it was my heart which made me suffer the most—my heart and my lungs. Tightness of the chest—my heart failed me; but at last I went to sleep." A little further on he says, "Do you know, the last thing I recall is your speaking to me. And you were the last to do so. I remember seeing your face; but I was too weak to answer."

This dialogue at first disconcerted Professor Hyslop. He had tried to make his father tell the

name of the malady from which the latter thought he suffered—catarrh. It was only when he read over the notes of the sitting, a little later, that he perceived all at once that his father had been describing the last hours of his life in the terms habitual to him. Professor Hyslop had been mistaken again. The doctor had noticed pain in the stomach at 7 a.m. The heart action began to decline at 9.30; this was shortly followed by terrible difficulty in breathing, and death followed. When his father's eyelids fell, James Hyslop said, "He is gone," and he was the last to speak. This last incident seems to indicate that consciousness in the dying lasts much longer than is believed.

Soon after Professor Hyslop asked his father if he remembered some special medicine he had sent him from New York. The communicator had much trouble in remembering the very strange name of this medicine, but ended by giving it, though incorrectly spelled.

During the first fifteen sittings Professor Hyslop had asked as few questions as possible, and when he was obliged to do so, he had so expressed them that they should not contain the answer. But at the 16th sitting he abandoned this reserve intentionally. He wished to see what the result would be if he took the same tone with the communicator as is taken with a friend in flesh and blood. Professor Hyslop says, "The result was that I talked with my disincarnated father with as much ease as if I were talking with him living, through the telephone. We understood each other at a hint, as in an ordinary conversation." They spoke of everything

—of a fence which Robert Hyslop was thinking of repairing when he died; of the taxes he had left unpaid; of the cares two of his children had caused him, one of whom had never given him much satisfaction, while the other was an invalid; of the election of President M'Kinley and of many other things.

Can it be said that there were no inexact statements made by the communicator during all these sittings? There are some, but very few. I shall speak of them in the following chapter. In any case, there is no trace of a single intentional untruth in the whole sixteen sittings.

CHAPTER XV

The "influence" again—Other incidents—Statistics.

AT this point I must return to a fact which is surprising on any hypothesis we may prefer: the utility of presenting to the medium objects which have belonged to the person from whom we wish to obtain the supposed communications. Phinuit used to say that he found the "influence" of the dead persons on these objects, and the "influence" was all the stronger if the object had been worn or carried long, and if it had passed through few hands; different successive "influences" seem to weaken one another. I have said that we are totally ignorant of the nature of this "influence," but I have also said that it might not improbably be supposed to consist of vibrations left by our thoughts and feelings upon material objects. However this may be, Phinuit seemed to read this "influence," and draw from it the greater part of the information he gave. Generally, in spite of his affirmations to the contrary, he did not appear to be in direct relation with the communicators at all. Since the disappearance of the Phinuit *régime* and the appearance of that of Imperator, the presentation of small objects is still of use; but it must be remarked that it has never been indispensable, and that communicators often appear

without having been attracted by any "influence." But under the present system the information received appears to be much less read from the "influence"; there is much more sense of the real presence of the communicators. Of what use, then, are the small objects given to the medium? Neither the controls nor the communicators have explained, which is a pity. Under the new system managed by Imperator and his helpers such small articles seem chiefly useful for "holding" the communicator, for preventing his going away, and for maintaining a certain cohesion in his thoughts. Rector constantly repeats, "Give me something to keep him and clear up his ideas." The communicator would apparently need a *point de repère* in order to remain at the desired place, and this *point de repère* would be furnished him by some object he has often used, the "influence" left on which he seems to perceive more clearly than anything else. According to George Pelham, we may also suppose that the communicator somehow perceives the mind of the sitter, but this mind is imprisoned in matter, and greatly clouded by it; the communicator only recognises the mind of the sitter when it is functioning actively, if I may thus express it; when the sitter is thinking, and, above all, thinking of the communicator. This is why, when the communicator perceives that his ideas are becoming confused, he constantly says reproachfully to the sitter, "Oh! why don't you speak? Say something to me, help me. You want me to work for you, but you will not do anything for me." The dead cousin of Professor Hyslop, Robert MacClellan, says to him, for example, "Speak

to me, for Heaven's sake. Help me to reach you." Analogous passages are very numerous.

I return to Professor Hyslop's report. The most important communicator after his father during the sittings was his uncle Carruthers, whose name, however, was always mangled by Rector, and given as *Clarke* or *Charles*. This uncle had died only twenty days before the first sitting.[1] At his first communication he inquires anxiously about his wife Eliza, Robert Hyslop's sister, whom his death had left desolate. "It is I, James," he says to the inquirer. "Give my love to Eliza; tell her not to get discouraged, she will be better soon. I see her often in despair." Professor Hyslop asks, "Do you know why she grieves?" "Yes, because I left her; but I did not really leave her. I wish I could tell you all I would like . . . you would not think I had left entirely. Will you comfort her? She ought not to be left lonely." "Yes, I will comfort her." "I am so glad!" At that time Professor Hyslop did not guess that his aunt was so completely alone and in such deep despair. He only found this out on inquiry.

I will quote another incident of "Uncle Carruthers'" communications, because on account of its stamp of vivid realism it is one of those which the telepathic hypothesis does not explain satisfactorily. Mr Carruthers suddenly perceives the presence of Dr Hodgson and says, "You are not Robert Hyslop's son, are you? You are not George."[2] Dr Hodgson

[1] *See* Professor Hyslop's Report, *Proc. of S.P.R.*, vol. xvi. p. 90, etc., for "Carruthers."

[2] Name of one of Professor Hyslop's brothers.

replies, "No, I am not George." "No, James, I know you very well, but this one" (speaking again to Dr Hodgson), "Did you know the boys? Did you know me?"

I shall only quote one more incident of these interesting sittings. The communicator this time is Professor Hyslop's brother Charles, who died in 1864 aged four and a half. Robert Hyslop's last child had been born long after Charles's death. "James, I am your brother Charles. I am happy. Give my love to my new sister Henrietta. Tell her I shall know her some day. Our father often talks of her." A little further comes this curious phrase, "Our father would much like you to have his pictures, *if you are still in the body, James.*"

I have said there were some inexact statements, but they are very few. I will quote two concerning proper names.

The family name of "Uncle Carruthers" could never be given properly. He was always called Uncle Charles or Clarke. The error is probably attributable to Rector, to whom the name Carruthers was not familiar.

The other mistake is odder still, though it may also be attributed to Rector. Robert Hyslop's second wife was named Margaret, familiarly called Maggie. Now, although it was impossible to misunderstand when Robert Hyslop was talking of his wife, this name Maggie never came correctly. Professor Hyslop waited a long time without rectifying the mistake; he waited for the communicator to perceive it and correct it himself, but this spontaneous correction was not made. At last he wanted the

matter cleared up, and Dr Hodgson explained that the name of Professor Hyslop's step-mother had not been given. Rector, failing to understand, gave up his place to George Pelham, who began by administering a tolerably sharp scolding to the sitters. "Well, why do you not come out and say, Give me my step-mother's name, and not confuse him about anything except what you really want? By Jove! I remember how you confused me, and I don't want any more of it. I am going to find out, and if your step-mother has a name you shall have it." George Pelham went out of the "machine" and returned shortly, saying, "I do not see any reason for anxiety about *Margaret*." Margaret was really the name asked for, but one would have expected to obtain it in its more habitual form, Maggie. However, it is easy to understand that Robert Hyslop should not have given the familiar name of his wife to a stranger like George Pelham.

While Professor Hyslop was preparing his report, a number of his friends who knew of his researches asked him what proportion of truth and error he had met with in these manifestations. This frequently-repeated question suggested to him the idea of making tables in which this proportion should be made clear at a glance. This kind of statistics would be important for the class of persons who think themselves stronger-minded than the rest, and who tell you, "I only believe in the eloquence of figures." Such people do not realise that battalions of figures are like battalions of men, not always so strong as is supposed.

However, Professor Hyslop took all the "inci-

dents" or statements made by the communicators and classed them according to the amount of truth or error they contained. He then divided the incidents into factors. I will give an example which will help me to define later on what Professor Hyslop means by *incident* and *factor*[1]: "My Aunt Susan visited my brother." This is an incident, or statement of a complete fact. This incident is composed of four factors which are not necessarily connected with one another. The first is *my aunt*, the second the name *Susan*, the third the *visit*, the fourth *my brother*. Therefore an incident may be defined as a name, a conception or a combination of conceptions forming an independent fact; it may be again a combination of possibly independent facts forming a single whole in the mind of the communicator. The factors would be the facts, names, actions, or events which do not necessarily suggest each other, or which are not necessarily suggested by a given name or fact.

Naturally, in tables constructed on these lines, the facts cannot be classified according to their importance as *proofs;* they can only be reckoned as true or false. Thus incidents which have only a restricted value as proofs are on a level with others which are in themselves very valuable as proofs. This is really the weak point of these statistics. The proofs need to be examined one by one, and not as a whole.

However, the tables have one advantage; the greatest sceptic, after a glance at them, can no longer invoke chance, the great *Deus ex machinâ* of the ignorant and indolent.

[1] *Proc. of S.P.R.*, vol. xvi. p. 115.

Professor Hyslop has constructed a table for each sitting, and a table of the sittings as a whole. I cannot reproduce these tables for the readers, who would require the notes of the sittings to understand them. I shall only give the definite results.

Thus, out of 205 incidents, 152 are classed as true, 37 as indeterminate, and only 16 as false. Out of the 927 factors composing these incidents, 717 are classed as true, 167 as indeterminate, and 43 as false.[1]

It should be said that Professor Hyslop has perhaps overestimated the number of false and unverifiable incidents. Many incidents or factors classed as false or unverifiable have been later found to be exact. And besides, the incidents of a transscendental and consequently unverifiable nature might have been omitted from these tables. But in this case again it has been thought better to give the false and doubtful facts full play. The reader must draw from these results whatever conclusion seems to him the most correct.

[1] *Proc. of S.P.R.*, vol. xvi. p. 121.

CHAPTER XVI

Examination of the telepathic hypothesis—Some arguments which render its acceptance difficult.

I HAVE mentioned in passing what should be understood by the word *telepathy*. I shall repeat my explanation; it is necessary that the reader should have it well in mind, as in this chapter I am about to examine the telepathic hypothesis and endeavour to find out if it will cover the facts which we are studying. By telepathy is here meant, not only the power of obtaining information from the consciousness and subconsciousness of the sitters on the part of the secondary personalities of Mrs Piper, but also their power to read the consciousness and subconsciousness of persons somewhere or anywhere else on earth, no matter where, distance in no way increasing the difficulty of this reading. This is evidently among hypotheses a wide and far-reaching one, and yet, if we reject the spiritualistic hypothesis, there is no other which will cover all the facts.

The following arguments here briefly indicated are, with others, developed at length in Professor Hyslop's book. I shall not again go over those which circumstances have necessitated my explaining with sufficient clearness before in the course of this work.

To begin with, what is the origin of this telepathic hypothesis? Is it justified by the facts of experimental or spontaneous observation among psychologists? Certainly not; if we only reckoned the experiments and observations of official psychology, the hypothesis of telepathy, as we understand it, would be almost unfounded. This hypothesis is in reality founded on our ignorance; we may admit it temporarily, because we are ignorant of the latent powers of the human mind, and because we have every reason to think these latent powers great and numerous. I think that the first wide use of it was made in the famous book by Gurney, Myers, and Podmore, *Phantasms of the Living*. The telepathic hypothesis might very well be admitted as an explanation of the facts recorded in that book, although the spiritualistic hypothesis would explain them as well, or even better. But when we are considering other facts, such as those of Mrs Piper's trance, for example, the telepathic hypothesis, in order to explain them, must be stretched beyond permitted limits.

In the first place, with regard to reading the consciousness of those present, it would seem that, if we were dealing with telepathy, the so-called communicator ought generally to bring out the facts of which the sitters have been thinking most intently. But this hardly ever happens; in Professor Hyslop's sittings it never happens. Certainly many of the incidents related were in the consciousness of the sitters, but the latter were not thinking about them till the communicator recalled them.

For the same way, if we were dealing with tele-

pathy, it is to be supposed that the communicators would be the persons whom the sitters expect. Now this is far from being the case. In the fifteen years during which Mrs Piper's mediumship has been studied, a great number of communicators have appeared about whom nobody was thinking. Professor Hyslop, among others, says that he has met with several communicators whom he did not in the least expect. Others whom he expected did not appear. It is a fact worthy of remark that in Professor Hyslop's sittings only those persons appeared who were capable of telling something of a nature to prove their identity; the others seem to have been systematically put aside by Imperator, even when information concerning them was abundant in the consciousness and subconsciousness of the sitter.

It would seem that, if we were dealing with telepathy, the self-styled communicators would most easily utter the least remote ideas of the sitters' minds; the nearest, most vivid ideas ought to appear first. Now this is far from being the case. It seems to make no difference to the communicator whether the idea is familiar or otherwise to the minds of the living.

When it is a question of facts entirely unknown to the sitters and known only to persons living at a great distance, this distance might be expected to affect telepathic mind-reading; nothing in nature authorises us to neglect this law of distance. We can only conceive the telepathic process as a propulsion of waves through space; these waves should decrease with distance; the contrary is absolutely inconceivable. Now this does not happen; if the fact exists

only in the consciousness of a person who is at the time at the far ends of the earth, it makes no difference in the precision of the details. If an analogy should be made between telepathy—as we must conceive it, to explain the phenomena—and wireless telegraphy, Mrs Piper entranced must be regarded as a mere coherer of the telepathic waves. But this analogy is non-existent; wireless telegraphy is far from being unaffected by distance, and besides, when the coherer functions, it is because another instrument is emitting particular waves. When a fact known only to a distant person is reported, as in Mrs Piper's phenomena, it rarely happens that the distant person was actively thinking of the fact, which was lying unnoticed in the lowest strata of his consciousness. When the experimenter makes his inquiries at the conclusion of the sitting, it is often found that a definite effort on the part of the absent person is required before the fact is recalled to memory.

It would be well to reflect before we grant to telepathy a power of omniscience, independent of all known laws.

Another well-observed fact, opposed to the telepathic theory, is the selection made amongst incidents by the communicator. If we were dealing with telepathy, the secondary personalities of the medium would sometimes be mistaken, make blunders, record facts which the so-called communicator could never have known, but which the sitter alone knows well. Now this never happens. The reported facts are always common to at least two consciousnesses, that of the communicator and that of the sitter, or that of

the communicator and that of a distant person. The inaccuracies prove nothing against this argument; if they are wilful falsehoods they simply prove that the communicator is a liar, and not that he is a secondary personality of Mrs Piper. If the reported facts are unverifiable, this does not prove that they are inexact.

If the telepathic theory expresses the truth, we must grant an almost infinite power to telepathy. This supposition is indispensable to account for the facts. Then how shall we understand the errors and confusions of the communicators? How can an infinite power seem at times so limited, so finite, when the conditions remain unchanged? On the other hand, the lapses of memory and confusions are quite explicable on the spiritualistic theory; we cannot reasonably think that a change so great as death should not induce some disturbance of mind, at least temporarily, or should not greatly weaken certain groups of memories which, in the new surroundings, have no longer any practical use.

A change of communicators has always been frequent, but was especially so in Professor Hyslop's sittings. Mr Robert Hyslop constantly says to his son, "James, I am getting weak; wait for me, I am coming back." And then another communicator appears on the spot. The telepathic hypothesis cannot explain this fact; it would seem quite natural that the communicator should be always the same. To explain it, another hypothesis—that of suggestion on the part of the sitter—must be added to the telepathic hypothesis. But the spiritualistic hypothesis, on the other hand, explains this perfectly well, even

though we may be compelled to reckon with the complications which the admission of the existence of another world may introduce.

The existence of the self-styled intermediaries between sitter and communicator is another fact which does not fit in with the telepathic theory. Formerly Phinuit was the most common intermediary; then George Pelham collaborated with him; in Professor Hyslop's sittings, and, I believe, in all subsequent sittings since the installation of the Imperator *régime*, the intermediary is Rector. It is he who presides at the functioning of the "machine," because he is particularly competent — so say the communicators. These intermediaries have very defined and life-like characters. Phinuit, George Pelham and Rector are as unlike each other as possible. What, on the telepathic hypothesis, has had the power to create them? Mrs Piper's secondary personalities should have incarnated the communicator without intermediary. In order to understand this ephemeral reconstitution of a consciousness which has for ever vanished, we should have to allow that the scattered elements of this consciousness had temporarily grouped themselves around the *point de repère* formed by the secondary personality of Mrs Piper. We should then see how difficult it is to explain the presence of these intermediaries. But if, on the other hand, we accept the spiritualistic hypothesis as well founded, we must admit that these intermediaries account for their presence very plausibly.

Here is another argument, which, I think, is very strong, against the hypothesis of telepathy. Subjects in the hypnotic state, and the secondary person-

alities which appear in this hypnotic state, according to the precise and decisive experiments made by modern science, have an extremely definite notion of time. If you tell a hypnotised subject to perform an action in a year, at such an hour and minute, he will never fail, so to speak, although when he is awakened there remains in his memory no trace of the order. Now the communicators, in the phenomena we are studying, have an extremely vague notion of time, because, they say, time is not a concept of the world in which they live. How is it that telepathy, which can do so much, owns itself incapable, or nearly so, of determining the moment when an action has been performed? What prevents it from reading the idea of time, as well as any other idea, in the minds of the persons present, since the notion of time is as clear and precise in them at least as any other notion?

To conclude, I should say that we are entirely ignorant of the point where the powers of telepathy begin and end. What I have just said makes the telepathic hypothesis an unlikely explanation; but, as Boileau said long ago, "Le vrai peut quelque fois n'être pas vraisemblable"—Truth may sometimes be unlikely.

CHAPTER XVII

Some considerations which strongly support the spiritualistic hypothesis—Consciousness and character remain unchanged—Dramatic play—Errors and confusions.

THE unity of character and consciousness in the communicators is one of the reasons which most strongly support the spiritualistic hypothesis. If we were dealing with Mrs Piper's secondary personalities, the first difficulty would be found in their great number. I do not know the exact number of communicators who have asserted their appearance by means of her organism. But several hundreds may be found in the Reports of the Society for Psychical Research, and they are certainly far from being all mentioned. Now each communicator has kept the same character throughout, to such an extent that, with a little practice, it is possible to recognise the communicator at the first sentence he utters, if he has already communicated. Some of the communicators only appear at long intervals, but nevertheless they remain unchanged. But, on the telepathic hypothesis, it is not easy to understand that a self-styled communicator, a merely ephemeral consciousness reconstituted out of the scattered recollections of the sitters, should be thus reconstituted only at long intervals, suddenly, often without

apparent cause, and always with the same characteristics. This unity of consciousness and character is particularly evident in the controls—that is, in such of the communicators as have appeared uninterruptedly for years, on account of their acting as intermediaries for others, and helping them with their experience. If it cannot reasonably be admitted that the occasional communicators are only secondary personalities of the medium, the impossibility must be extended to the controls. Either all the communicators are, without exception, secondary personalities, or none of them are; for all give the same impression of intense life-likeness and reality. If they are indeed secondary personalities, science has hitherto studied none like them. I have already sketched Phinuit's character, which has remained consistently the same during twelve years. The reader should also have a sufficiently clear notion of George Pelham's individuality, which is also consistent; even now, when George Pelham appears, we find him unchanged.

The individualities of the present controls are even more marked, and not less consistent. None of those who, up to the present time, have communicated through Mrs Piper have in the least resembled Imperator and his assistants. The principal traits of Imperator's character are a profound and sincere religious sentiment, much gravity and seriousness, great benevolence, an infinite pity for man incarnate on account of the miseries of this life of darkness and chaos; and with this, an imperious temper, so that he does well to call himself Imperator; he commands, and will be obeyed, but he wills only the

right. The other spirits who gravitate around him —Rector, Doctor, Prudens, and George Pelham— pay him profound respect. This character of Imperator is quite the same as we find in the works of Stainton Moses. Those who decline to accept the spiritualist hypothesis on any terms may say that Mrs Piper has drawn the character from this source. She must at least know the book we have mentioned —*Spirit Teachings*. When the effort to communicate with Stainton Moses was made, and nothing was obtained but incoherence and falsehood, Dr Hodgson, wishing to discover what influence the normal Mrs Piper's knowledge of Stainton Moses's works might have upon the secondary personality calling itself Stainton Moses (if we are dealing with secondary personalities), took her a copy of *Spirit Teachings*. She read it, or it is to be concluded she did so, but there was no result, and no effect upon the communicator who called himself Stainton Moses. Nevertheless, I repeat, it may be asserted with some probability that Mrs Piper took the character of Imperator from this source. But then, from whence did she take the other characters?

Imperator and his friends speak in a distinctive biblical style. Generally, at the beginning of the sittings, Imperator either utters a prayer himself or dictates one to Rector, who reproduces it. Here is a specimen. "Holy Father, we are with Thee in all Thy ways, and to Thee we come in all things. We ask Thee to give us Thy tender love and care. Bestow Thy blessings upon this Thy fellow-creature. Help him to be all that Thou dost ask him. Teach him to walk in the path of righteousness and truth.

He needs Thy loving care. Teach him in all things to do Thy holy will . . . and we leave all else in Thy hands. Without Thy care we are indeed bereft. Watch over and guide his footsteps and lead him into truth and light. Father, we beseech Thee so to open the blinded eyes of mortals that they may know more of Thee and Thy tender love and care." Among the phrases which ring familiarly to English ears we notice one peculiarity, and one that constantly recurs. Imperator calls God "Father," and yet, when he commends man to God, he calls him God's fellow-creature, His neighbour, and not His creature. Evidently Imperator's idea of God differs from ours; it would seem that he thinks us an emanation from the Divine, eternal as the Divine itself.

Many readers may not be inclined to attach much value to Imperator's prayers. They will take them for one of the diabolical inventions of which secondary personalities are capable. Evidently, if we take them apart from the rest, this is the most plausible explanation; but the character and ideas of Imperator must be considered as a whole. I can assure my readers that there is nothing diabolical about him. If Stainton Moses and Mrs Piper have created him, they have created a masterpiece; Imperator inspires respect in the most sceptical.

There is another aspect of the phenomena which telepathy does not explain; the dramatic play. The personages at the other end of the wire act, as far as we can judge, with all the appropriateness and distinctive characteristics of reality. There are incidents of this dramatic play, which telepathy cannot

explain, in nearly all the sittings. I have given some of them in passing, and will now give some more examples. At M. Bourget's second sitting Mrs Pitman, whom I have mentioned before, suddenly appears, and speaks nearly as follows:[1] "Monsieur, I come to offer you my help. I lived in France and spoke French fairly well when I was living. Tell me what you want, and I can perhaps help you to communicate with this lady." In order to understand the appropriateness of this intervention we must remember that George Pelham, who was acting as intermediary, had complained at the beginning of the sitting that the communicating spirit spoke French and that he did not understand her.

One day George Pelham is asked for information about Phinuit, and is about to give it. But Phinuit, who is manifesting through the voice while George Pelham is doing so in writing, perceives this and cries, "You had better shut up about me!" And the spectators witnessed a sort of struggle between the head and the hand. Then George Pelham writes, "All right, it is settled; we will say no more about it."

During a sitting in which the sitter's wife gave proofs of identity of a very private nature to her husband she said, "I tell you this, but don't let that gentleman hear." "That gentleman" could not be Dr Hodgson, who had left the room; it was the invisible George Pelham who was habitually present at the sittings at this period.

On April 30, 1894, Mr James Mitchell has a sitting.[2] Phinuit begins by giving him appropriate

[1] Evidently addressing George Pelham.

[2] *Proc. of S.P.R.*, vol. xiii. p. 519.

advice about his health. He ends by saying, "You worry, too." Then he adds, "There's a voice I hear as plainly as you would a bell rung, and she says, 'That's right, doctor, tell him not to worry, because he always did so—my dear husandb—I want him to enjoy his remaining days in the body. Tell him I am Margaret Mitchell, and I will be with him to the end of eternity, spiritually.'"

The communicators often ask one or more of those present to go out of the room, and they give one or other of the following reasons, according to circumstances. The first is that very private information is about to be given. I have quoted an example in speaking of George Pelham, when James Howard asked him to tell something which only they two knew. George Pelham, preparing to do so, begins by asking Dr Hodgson to leave the room. How oddly discreet for secondary personalities! On other occasions certain persons are asked to go out temporarily, because, say the controls, "You have relations and friends who want very much to communicate with you, and they prevent all communication by their insistence and their efforts."

On a certain occasion Professor Hyslop rises and goes to the other end of the room, passing Mrs Piper, upon which George Pelham, apparently offended, writes, "He has passed in front of Imperator! Why does he do that?"

It would need a volume to recount all the little analogous incidents which telepathy does not explain. These will do as examples. Will it be said that these small dramas resemble the creations of the same kind which occur in delirium or dreams? But in the

first place, in delirium and dreams, the spectator does not realise, as he does here, the presence of persons who have given many details tending to prove their identity. Again, the real cause of these creations of dream and delirium is unknown to us. We might assert, without being fanciful, that sickness is only their opportunity and not their cause. Lastly, a third group of facts, which strongly militates in favour of the spiritualist hypothesis, consists of the mistakes and confusions. This would probably not be the opinion of a superficial observer; many take these errors and confusions as a reason for entirely rejecting the spiritualist hypothesis; generally because they have a strange notion of a "spirit," without any analogy in nature. Deceived by absurd and antiquated theological teaching, they imagine that the most pitiable drunkard, for example, becomes a being of ideal beauty and omniscience from the day he is disincarnated. It cannot be so. Our spirits, if we have them, must progress slowly. When they leap into the great unknown they do not at the same time leap into perfection; they were finite and limited, and do not become immediately infinite. Disincarnated man, like incarnated man, has lapses of intelligence, memory and morality. The existence of these lapses very well explains the greater part of the mistakes in the communications. I have no room to develop this idea, but the reader can do it easily. I will only quote one example of lapse of memory. Mr Robert Hyslop said he had a penknife with a brown handle, which he carried first in his waistcoat pocket and afterwards in his coat. On inquiry, it was discovered that he was mistaken, and that he really

carried it in his trousers pocket. What man living has not made a hundred such mistakes? In order to explain the phenomena we are studying by the telepathic hypothesis, we must suppose that telepathy has infinite power with which no obstacle can interfere. Then why does it make mistakes? And why does it make just the mistakes that an imperfect, finite spirit would make? Must we suppose that Dame Telepathy is a mere incarnation of the demon of fraud and deceit?

CHAPTER XVIII

Difficulties and objections—The identity of Imperator—Vision at a distance—Triviality of the messages—Spiritualist Philosophy—Life in the other world.

UP till now I have said a great deal of evil of telepathy. I believe that I have demonstrated, not that the theory is false, but that it is an unlikely explanation of the facts. Shall we say, then, that the spiritualistic hypothesis, the only reasonable one after the dismissal of telepathy, can be accepted without difficulty and without objections? Not at all. Many objections, more or less serious, are still made to the spiritualistic hypothesis. To my mind there is only one that is serious; I will speak of it in conclusion. Many of the others are raised by persons who have a merely superficial acquaintance with the problem; their arguments are more polemical than scientific.

To begin with, some of them want to know why the controls, Imperator, Doctor, Rector, Prudens, conceal themselves under these pseudonyms. If they are, as they say, disincarnated spirits, who formerly lived in bodies, why do they not say who they were? Does not their silence on this point

indicate that they are only secondary personalities of the medium?

This objection is not very serious. In the first place, the controls told Stainton Moses their names. If they do not wish these names revealed, it is without doubt for excellent reasons, which it is not difficult to imagine. There is every indication that these controls belonged to a generation considerably remote from ours; their language, the turn of their minds, and some of their assertions, all point to this. If they were well-known men, and had revealed their names, the critics would merely see a reason the more for crying fraud. They would say, "The medium has read all that, and repeats it to us in hypnosis." If, on the other hand, they were obscure persons, and had given information about their lives, the information would be unverifiable. And then the sceptics would cry on the spot, "Folly; these are the inventions of the medium's secondary personality." The controls may have still other reasons for not revealing themselves to us. This life, when once it has been left behind, may seem to the spirit to be a more or less painful nightmare. There is nothing astonishing in the fact that he does not care to recall to others the part he played in this nightmare, even if the part were a distinguished one. We ourselves know nothing but this life; we do not admit that there is any other. Therefore we all wish to shine in it like meteors, if possible. Possibly disincarnated spirits, seeing things from a higher point of view, think otherwise. In short, the controls, Imperator, Rector, Doctor and Prudens, may refrain from speaking of their former life simply

because they are wise. Would it not have been wiser of Phinuit to hold his tongue than to tell us a mass of improbabilities?

Amongst those who study these phenomena there are many who see in the triviality of the greater part of the messages a strong presumption against the spiritualist hypothesis. Some of these messages are signed, it is true, by illustrious names—though that is not the case with Mrs Piper. But this regrettable fact may be variously explained. In the first place, there may be rogues, charlatans and fools on both sides, since it is probable that the soul passes from this world to the other just as it is, and that, if it progresses at all, it progresses slowly. How many individuals see in spiritualism only a means of putting forward their wretched personalities or of exploiting their contemporaries! Such persons would not shrink from representing their lucubrations as communications from the next world; they would sign them with the most august of names if to do so would further their designs. Finally, it is not even necessary to suppose that these messages are due to dishonesty; the number of mystifiers may be at least as great on the other side as on this; a sort of law of affinity which seems to rule the world of spirits may cause these lower beings to be attracted by uncultured mediums, while the great spirits are repelled by them. It would be these larvæ of the other world who give the messages which disconcert when they do not scandalise us. But the man of science should not be rebuffed by these messages which, in spite of their contents, are important, if they result in irre-

sistible proof of the fact that there exist outside of us and around us intelligent beings resembling ourselves.

But when we are dealing with developed spirits, who have begun by giving proofs of their identity, it is not true that the messages are always trivial. They often contain ideas of much breadth of view and elevation. The form is generally defective, but those who have studied Mrs Piper's phenomena will be indulgent to the form, and sometimes even to the matter. The spirit in contact with the medium's organism suffers, as I have said several times, from a kind of delirium; besides which the organism only responds to his efforts imperfectly. "My dear friends," says George Pelham, "do not look at me too critically; to try to transmit your thoughts through the organism of a medium is like trying to crawl through a hollow log." In short, the difficulties are enormous.

It may very well be that great spirits have really been the authors of very poor messages. It has happened to each of us to make poetical or other compositions in our dreams which we have thought admirable; we say in delight, "What a pity I shall not be able to remember that when I wake!" But sometimes we do remember, and then we smile with contempt at what had delighted us during sleep. Now the communicators constantly repeat that they are dreaming while they are in the atmosphere of the medium. "Everything seems so clear to me," says Robert Hyslop to his son, "and when I try to tell you, James, I cannot."

These considerations prove that we must not hasten to conclude, with Professor Flournoy, that if there is

a future life it is one of wretched degeneration, one more misery added to all the others which overwhelm us in this miserable universe.

No; as Professor James says, in this world we live only at the surface of our being; if death is not annihilation, then it is an awakening. It does not follow that the life of the other world is not higher and more intense than this, because communication with it is difficult.

Another serious objection to the spiritualist hypothesis is the philosophy with which certain too eager persons have connected it. Spiritualism, which should at present be but the mere beginning of a science, is, according to them, already a philosophy for which the universe holds no secrets. How should such puny creatures as ourselves hope to solve the problems of the universe by *a priori* reasoning? All that we can reasonably hope, is to wrench from nature some of the secrets nearest to us, surrounding ourselves with a thousand precautions in order not grossly to deceive ourselves.

I rank the spiritualistic philosophy with other philosophies. Perhaps some of its dicta proceed from spirits, if spirits exist, but the system as a whole most surely does not. But then, it will be said, the people who have elaborated this philosophy must have been impostors. No, not inevitably; I will even venture to say that imposture is unlikely. The key to the mystery may be found in other characteristics of humanity.

The most formidable obstacle to the admission of the spiritualist hypothesis is in the messages which tend to represent the other world, in which, it appears,

matter is not perceived, and space and time are unknown, as being all the same a servile copy of this, or a sketch of it. If Phinuit or another control is asked to describe a communicator, the description is generally given with exactness, and is the same there as it was here; sometimes the communicator even goes so far as to wear the same clothes, made of the same material. But these descriptions are without importance, as it may be replied that the communicators or controls give these details purely to prove identity. However, I know of no message in which the communicator has been frank enough to say, "Of course you may suppose that the form I have here is not the same as I had in your world." Or again, "The idea of form differs totally in our world and in yours; I cannot make you understand what that idea is here, so it is of no use to question me." Unfortunately neither communicators nor controls speak thus; they all say or allow it to be supposed that the human form is the same in both worlds.

But when action and events in that world are represented as being the same as in this, then our credulity cries out in remonstrance. That a deceased doctor should tell us that he continues to visit his patients, a painter that he continues to daub canvas, is more than we can admit. But, it may be explained, the doctor and the painter are temporarily delirious; they do not know what they are saying. Unfortunately these passages are too numerous to be always attributed to delirium. Certain communicators say, with all the gravity in the world, and when they seem in full possession of themselves, that they breathe, live in houses, listen to lectures,

and that a deceased child is beginning to learn to read. This is an enormous difficulty, I repeat. I point it out without trying to solve it; I am unable to offer a plausible explanation. Professor Hyslop has tried, but I do not think he has succeeded.

CHAPTER XIX

The medium's return to normal life—Speeches made while the medium seems to hover between the two worlds.

In Mrs Piper's case, the moments which precede the actual quitting of the trance offer, at least at present, a special interest. I think it well therefore to dwell on this point a little. To avoid endless circumlocutions, I shall speak as if the spiritualistic hypothesis were proved. Indeed, whatever the future fate of this hypothesis may be, and in spite of the serious objection spoken of in the last chapter, it is, I believe, the only one that can be reasonably adopted for the moment.

When the sitting is over and the automatic writing has ceased, Mrs Piper begins to return gradually to her normal state. She then utters with more or less distinctness some apparently disconnected phrases which it is sometimes difficult to catch. She is like a person talking in sleep. Dr Hodgson and Professor Hyslop have collected as many of these broken sentences as they could, keeping them separately under a different heading from the record of the rest of the sitting proper. At the end, Mrs Piper often asks this odd question, "Did you hear my head snap?" And after her head is supposed to have snapped she looks round

her in apparent astonishment and alarm, and then all is over, she no longer remembers what she has said or written during the trance.

We shall see that these scraps of phrase are less incoherent than they seem, and that it is worth while to collect them. Very often when numerous unsuccessful efforts have been made to recall a proper name during the sitting, Mrs Piper pronounces it when coming out of the trance; when she is re-entering her body, the communicator or communicators repeat the name to her insistently, and make great efforts to cause her to remember and pronounce it as she comes out of the trance. I have already quoted an example of this. M. Paul Bourget asked the name of the town in which the artist he was communicating with had killed herself. The name did not come, but Mrs Piper pronounced it as she was leaving the trance—*Venice*. Mr Robert Hyslop's name was given in the same way the first time, but accompanied by very significant scraps of speech as follows. Mrs Piper first tried to pronounce the name, then she said *Hyslop*, and went on,—

"I am he.[1] Tell him I am his father. I— Good-bye, sir. I shouldn't take him away that way. Oh, dear. Do you see the man with the cross[2] shut out everybody? Did you see the light? What made the man's hair all fall off?"

Dr Hodgson asks, "What man?"

Mrs PIPER.—"That elderly gentleman that was trying to tell me something, but it wouldn't come."

[1] *Proc. of S.P.R.*, vol. xvi. p. 322.

[2] That is to say, Imperator, who always signalises his presence by making a cross on the paper, or, with his hand, in the air.

At a first glance this passage seems mere incoherence, but all the portions of sentences have a very clear meaning when they are examined together with the events of the sitting. They are, as it seems, commissions with which the medium is charged as she is returning into her organism, or they are observations made among themselves by the spirits present, which the medium automatically repeats, or they are the observations and questions of the medium herself. All that Mrs Piper says on coming out of the trance belongs to one of these three categories.

In the passage quoted, the words, "I am he. Tell him that I am his father," are a commission with which the medium is charged by Mr Robert Hyslop. Mrs Piper takes leave of Robert Hyslop with the formula, "Good-bye, sir." The phrases which follow, "Oh, dear. I shouldn't take him away that way. Do you see the man with the cross shut out everybody?" are the remarks of spirits repeated automatically, or Mrs Piper's own remarks on Imperator, who, seeing the light exhausted, imperiously sends off everybody, including Mr Robert Hyslop himself, in spite of his desire to remain with his son. Imperator must even have used some force, to justify the observation, "I should not take him away that way." The final phrases are always Mrs Piper's own questions and remarks. When she says, "Did you see the light?" she alludes without doubt to the light of the other world, invisible to us. The other sentences are clear enough, when we remember that Mr Robert Hyslop was entirely bald. There are utterances like these, only apparently incoherent on coming out of all the trances; but they vary in

length. The last words, if I am not mistaken, always come from Mrs Piper herself, which is logically to be expected, since she gradually loses the memory of the world she has just quitted, up to the definite moment of waking, marked by the so-called snap in her head.

These speeches on coming out of trance constitute, in our eyes, one more argument against the hypothesis of telepathy and secondary personalities, because there is no trace of simulation. To suppose simulation would be to accord to telepathy too much skill in the arts of deceit.

These speeches bring into the foreground the question: "What becomes of the medium's spirit during the trance, if there is a spirit?" The controls say that it leaves the organism and remains in the company of the group of communicating spirits.

"But then," it will be said, "if she lives for the time being in the other world, why does she not relate her impressions when she wakes?"

We must not forget that for spirits our life is a sleep, and that we are only conscious of what we acquire through the medium of our five senses. When the spirit is again plunged into the prison of the body, after having left it for a time, it goes to sleep once more and forgets all; it recommences living the fragmentary life which is all that the five senses permit. The complete absence of memory in the medium when awake is no more astonishing than the same phenomenon in a subject coming out of hypnosis, during which he may have talked, and even done much.

Besides, during the short instants when Mrs Piper

is as if suspended between two worlds, she still has a vague recollection of what she has just heard; the fragments of sentences she utters bear sufficient witness to this. She rarely fails to shed a few tears, and to say, "I want to stop here, I don't want to go back to the dark world!" Here is a characteristic passage, as an example. Mrs Piper, coming out of the trance, begins to weep and murmur, "I do not want to go back to the darkness . . . Oh, it is, it is, it must be the window . . . but I want to know . . . I want to know where they are all gone[1] . . . It is funny . . . I forgot that I was alive . . . Yes, Mr Hodgson, I forgot . . . I was going to tell you something, but I have forgotten what it was . . . You see, when my head snaps, I forget what I was going to say . . . It must be night. Oh, dear! I feel so weak . . . Is that my handkerchief?"

On other occasions she uses an odd figure of speech. "You see Rector turns round a dark board and says that's your world—and he turns round the other side and that's light, and he says that's his world. I don't want to go back to the dark world."

Another time she says, quite at the end, "Is that my body? how it pricks!"

It appears that Imperator, before sending her back to the "dark world," prays for her, and she sometimes repeats fragments of the prayers automatically.

"Is that a blessing? Say it."[2]

"Father be and abide with thee for evermore."

"Servus Dei—I don't know."

[1] The spirits in whose company she has been.

[2] *Proc. of S.P.R.*, vol. xvi. p. 396.

"I have all these to look out for. I leave thee well."

"Go and do the duties before thee."

"Blessings on thy head."

"The light shall cease."

"Why do you say that?"

"Are you going? Good-bye."

"I want to go along the same path with you."

"Hear the whistle?" (This was an earthly whistle, which those present also heard.)

CHAPTER XX

Encouraging results obtained—The problem must be solved.

AND now, can there be a conclusion to this work? It does not allow of any conclusion. The most I can do in terminating is to record certain facts. Dr Hodgson, Professor Hyslop and others, who, though unprejudiced, began these studies as sceptical as anyone, have ended, after long years of hesitation, by giving their adhesion to the spiritualist hypothesis. But, as they are careful to point out, they accept this hypothesis conditionally, and not definitely. New experiments and new facts may turn their minds in quite another direction.

Should we follow them? Should we each admit conditionally the spiritualist hypothesis? Not at all; it is not thus that knowledge is attained. Whoever believes that he has excellent reasons for preferring any other hypothesis should remain unshakable in his convictions till the time when new facts may oblige him to abandon them. Science does not ask that we should prefer this or the other explanation; it only asks that we should study the facts unprejudiced, that we should be sincere, and not shut our eyes childishly to the evidence.

If a future life is to be, I will not say proved, but admitted by a majority, a great number of experimenters, or, if you please, observers, working independently of one another in all quarters of the globe, must reach identical conclusions. Again, it must be possible for any intelligent man willing to make the effort, and retracing the path followed by the first observers, to arrive at the same conclusions. The *magister dixit* is out of date. Teachers in the present day must show their disciples the path of truth, and not try to impose upon them what they themselves regard as truth. Modern science knows no infallible Pope, speaking *ex cathedrâ*.

Further, we must not confine ourselves to the study of one side of mediumship only. The phenomena produced in the presence of mediums are various. All the phenomena classified as "psychical" must be carefully considered and thoroughly investigated. The grain must be separated from the chaff; it must be decided which among these phenomena appear to be due to spirits, which, according to the evidence, are due to incarnated minds, and finally, which (if there are such) have only ordinary physical causes. The new workmen who are entering the field of science have before them a long task of clearing the ground, but the ground seems to be of unexampled fertility; with a very little goodwill we shall reap such a harvest as has never been seen.

No doubt, though mediums able to produce certain second-rate phenomena are not rare, good mediums are not easy to discover; they are less rare, however, than the bones of *Anthropopithecus erectus*. When a good medium is discovered it is not necessary to call

a committee together and put the value he may have for science to the vote. If the "other world" exists, it appears that no "missing link" exists between it and our own.

Thus the general conclusion to be drawn from the work described in this little book, and from the other work of the Society for Psychical Research, is that devotion to these studies is far from being fruitless. Even official science might turn in this direction, if only in order to defend the doctrines dear to it. It will come to that, without doubt, but will it be soon? Humanity is but poor stuff, though the monists do not hesitate to hold it up to us as the highest expression in our corner of space of the consciousness of their great god Pan. The great majority of human units is composed of minds in first childhood, eager only for childish things.

By slightly modifying Plato's allegory it is easy to arrive at an understanding of the state of humanity at the present time. Imagine very imperfect, very undeveloped beings, possessing, however, an infinity of latent potentialities; imagine them born in a dark cavern where they swarm pell-mell, passing their time chiefly in devouring one another. Every moment this cavern is entered, and a certain number of these poor beings are taken out of it and carried into the light of day, that they may enjoy a higher life, and admire the beauties of nature. Those remaining in the cavern weep for their companions and think that they have for ever vanished. But in the vault of the cavern there are fissures through which a little light filters. A few inquisitive beings, a little more developed than their brothers, climb up

to these fissures; they look out, and believe that signs are made to them from outside. They say to themselves, "Those who are making signs to us are perhaps the companions who are constantly being carried off from amongst us; in that case they cannot be dead; they must be continuing to live up there." And they call to their brothers below, "Come and see; it looks as if our companions who go up yonder every day are making signs to us. We are not sure; but if we unite our efforts and intelligences perhaps we shall end by being certain." Do you suppose that the swarms on the ground of the cave will run? They have quite other things to do. They do not stone the importunate seekers, but they look on them askance and heap annoyances upon them. But we will drop allegory; and merely say how deplorable it is that psychical studies do not inspire more enthusiasm.

The doctors at first declared that mediumship was a form of neurosis. Nothing is less certain; I will even say that nothing is less probable. Educated people of independent social position when by chance they discover that they possess mediumistic gifts hide them carefully, instead of offering them spontaneously for study; they do not wish to be supposed to be diseased; nobody likes to proclaim his defects in public. This is why well-known mediums are nearly all recruited from the lower classes and the poor; they are obliged to make merchandise of their gifts; they are paid to produce phenomena, and, when these do not occur spontaneously, they cheat. Mediums should be sought for in the class of educated people who are not obliged

to work for their daily bread. There are as many or more in this class as in any other if we would only look for them. What should such mediums fear? Do not Mlle. Smith and Mrs Piper, when they allow competent persons to study their mediumship, render more valuable services to society than do so many social encumbrances, so many flies on the wheel who deafen us with their buzzing? Have they any reason to be ashamed?

Finally, in order to attain to any result in these studies, money is needed—why not say so? Interesting subjects must be paid when they need payment, and competent investigators must be paid when they need a salary. If a thousandth part of the sum devoted in a year to the art of killing were devoted to the solution of this problem, before ten years were over we should have settled the question, and humanity could boast an unexampled victory.

In America and all the Anglo-Saxon countries many persons, as noble as they are generous, give for science, for universal instruction, for founding universities and colleges. May they be blessed! They make a noble use of their money. But it is regrettable that as much money as is needed can be found for the search after—let us say—the *Anthropopithecus erectus*, and that it cannot be found for Psychical Research.

If I am not mistaken, a prize has been offered to whoever can find the means of communicating with the planet Mars. If this communication were ever established, I do not see how humanity would benefit by it, beyond the satisfaction of its curiosity; which is, however, a noble and legitimate curiosity. But

how much more helpful and interesting it would be to communicate with the world beyond the grave, if such a world there be, the world whither we are all bound. Perhaps some time mankind will realise this fact.

THE END

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